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The defense of New Zealand: Internal problems and diplomatic relations, 1935-1943

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**THE DEFENSE OF NEW ZEALAND: INTERNAL PROBLEMS
AND DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS
1935-1943**

**A Thesis
Presented to the
Department of History
and the
Faculty of the College of Graduate Studies
University of Omaha**

**In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts**

by 794
**Allen Longe
June 1968**

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Accepted for the faculty of the College of Graduate
Studies of the University of Omaha, in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree Master of Arts.

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PREFACE

The project undertaken is essentially tracing the difficulties and frustrations of New Zealand, as she desperately endeavored to defend herself against the threat of an invasion by Japan. It is not intended to be an all-inclusive survey of New Zealand during the war years, but covers only diplomatic and governmental procedures concerning defense. Within this framework of events is a description of a Dominion torn between intense loyalty to Great Britain and the need to sever many of these bonds in the interest of self-preservation. It is a study of a country attempting to embark upon a course of national self-interest but finding that it cannot break a tradition cherished for over a century.

This thesis would never have been attempted, much less completed, without the guidance and encouragement of Dr. A. Stanley Trickett, Chairman of the Department of History at the University of Omaha. I would also like to thank the graduate faculty of the Department of History for allowing me to do my graduate work under their direction. Deepest gratitude to Miss Ella Jane Dougherty of the Omaha University Library, whose patience and skill in locating the

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Riverton, Wyoming

Allen Longe

December, 1967

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CHAPTER I

PREPARATION FOR WAR

New Zealand, a country of limited strategic importance and geographically isolated from the rest of the world has maintained unusually strong ties with the mother country, Great Britain. This tenacious relationship, at a time when the other Commonwealth countries valued independent action, has led some historians to describe the attachment as a "mother complex."¹

Cultural and economic bonds with the mother country led New Zealand, prior to World War II, to be only passively interested in Asian affairs but vitally concerned with Europe and its troubles. The distance from Europe and limited knowledge of events in Asia gave New Zealand, before 1931, a sense of security. She saw no need for home defense and, in fact, at every Imperial Conference from 1919-1933 had been told that in the event of war, she should send food and men to Europe—just as she had done in World War I.² The

¹Louis Wasserman, "The United States and New Zealand; Political and Commercial Relations" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Dept. of History, University of California, 1948), p. 264. Hereafter cited as Wasserman, "The United States and New Zealand."

²Frederick Lloyd Whitfield Wood, The New Zealand People at War: Political and External Affairs (Wellington: War History Branch, Department of Internal Affairs, 1958), p. 59. Hereafter cited as Wood, Political and External Affairs.

sudden rise of Japanese power, however, caused the Dominion to question this policy.

At the Imperial Conference of 1933 much discussion, for the first time, centered around the new threat in Asia and the possibility of Japanese expansion into the Southern Pacific. To protect her Empire, Britain decided that the naval base at Singapore should be heavily fortified.³ In case of an emergency the Royal Navy would move to Singapore and use it as a base to protect the Commonwealth. Plans were also made for an elite Commonwealth force composed of troops from all the Dominions to be stationed in India during peace and moved to Singapore if war should come.⁴

New Zealand delegates left the conference determined to press for expansion of defenses against possible Japanese aggression. Hard hit by the economic depression, agrarian New Zealand had cut its defense budget from £901,000 for the fiscal year 1930-31 to £685,000 for 1931-32.⁵ The preoccupation of the Imperial Conference with Japan in 1933, however, prompted a somewhat reluctant Parliament to increase the

³In 1926 the New Zealand Parliament voted one million pounds to be used to help build Singapore. The last installment was paid in 1936. For more information see G. R. Powles (ed.), Contemporary New Zealand (Wellington and others: Whitcombe and Tombs, Ltd., 1938), p. 249. S. D. Waters, The Royal New Zealand Navy (Wellington: War History Branch, Department of Internal Affairs, 1956), p. 10. Hereafter cited as Waters, The Navy.

⁴Wood, Political and External Affairs, pp. 60-61.

⁵New Zealand, Parliamentary Debates, CCXXXVI (1936), 538.

defense budget from approximately £700,000 in 1932-33 to £790,000 for 1933-34.⁶ Plans were made for a coastal defense system, constructed over a period of six years at a cost of £1,000,000⁷ and an Imperial Defense Committee was formed to survey New Zealand resources and plan for any emergency that might arise.⁸

Hysteria over the Japanese did not exist for long. It was easy to rationalize that densely-populated Japan with pressing economic problems must inevitably expand into China.⁹ This, coupled with the fact that New Zealand, a land of few natural resources, had just concluded a trade agreement with Japan,¹⁰ made New Zealanders feel that there was little reason to fear the "Land of the Rising Sun." In fact, during 1935 the New Zealand Chiefs of Staff declared that war with Japan was possible, but suggested that such a war was much more likely to result from economic causes than from direct aggression.¹¹ The Chiefs added that relations with Japan were currently stable enough to allow for continuation of plans to send an expeditionary force to Europe even larger

⁶Ibid.

⁷Ibid., p. 555.

⁸Ibid., p. 559.

⁹Wood, Political and External Affairs, p. 64.

¹⁰Bernard K. Gordon, New Zealand Becomes a Pacific Power (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960), pp. 63-64.

¹¹Wood, Political and External Affairs, p. 62; Gordon, New Zealand Becomes a Pacific Power, p. 87.

than that which was sent in World War I.¹² Thus at the end of 1935, New Zealand's military planners were thinking chiefly of possible war in Europe and the Dominion's reaction to the same as a loyal member of the Commonwealth.

Complete reversal of this policy occurred when, in the last months of 1935, the Labour Party gained control of the government. The new Cabinet had neither experience nor had they been briefed on foreign affairs. Gradually they became aware of the actual threat of Japan and not only increased defense expenditure but also started a program to enlarge military forces.¹³ Total expenditure for the Armed Forces increased from slightly over £1,000,000 in 1935-36 to £1,526,000 for 1936-37.¹⁴ Efforts were made to enlarge all branches, but particular emphasis was placed on the Air Force as the major defense against invasion.¹⁵

The new Government, in matters of foreign policy, attempted to break a long tradition of allowing Britain to dictate the Dominion's position in world affairs. Interest in the League of Nations, which had been waning in the former administration, now became intrinsically involved in all policy considerations. The Labour Government believed that security in the Pacific as well as security of the entire

¹² Gordon, New Zealand Becomes a Pacific Power, p. 76.

¹³ Wood, Political and External Affairs, p. 63.

¹⁴ New Zealand, Parliamentary Debates, CCLI (1938), 384.

¹⁵ Ibid., CCXXXVI (1936), 546.

British Empire depended on the League.¹⁶ With this in mind the Dominion became one of the strongest exponents for League action,¹⁷ and in the remaining years before the war, on several occasions, directly opposed Great Britain's policies in relation to both European and Asiatic countries. This was indeed a departure from the docile New Zealand of previous years.

The independent attitude of the Labour Government, however, did not receive the united support of all people. Many New Zealanders thought it ridiculous for a small country with inexperienced politicians to oppose the tried statesmen and diplomats of Great Britain. To these people an independent policy seemed even more absurd when viewed in the light of the Dominion's total reliance on the mother country for defense.¹⁸ Other people saw the Japanese threat as being of no great significance. In a speech before the House of Representatives on August 19, 1936, F. Jones, Minister of Defense, stated that the danger, in the opinion of experts, was ". . . a raid by a cruiser or an armed merchantman or the

¹⁶Ian F. G. Milner, New Zealand's Interests and Policies in the Far East (New York: Institute of Pacific Relations, 1937), p. 83. Hereafter cited as Milner, Policies in the Far East.

¹⁷Gwendolen M. Carter, The British Commonwealth and International Security: The Role of the Dominions, 1919-1939 (Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1947), p. 259.

¹⁸Horace Belshaw (ed.), New Zealand (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1947), pp. 306-307.

laying of mines near our coast." He added that "the estimate of the size of the Force that would be landed in New Zealand . . . [/would be/] two hundred. . . ." ¹⁹ The presence of Singapore would stop any fleet from invading New Zealand because the cost would be greater than the gain. ²⁰

The heated criticism of Labour defense policy cooled when Japan launched her invasion of China in 1937. Invasion of Manchuria, in 1931, had been viewed somewhat passively, but the current invasion now caused definite public reaction. Newspapers generally concluded that this attack was indeed unwarranted aggression. ²¹ Longshoremen and dock workers, in complete agreement with the newspapers, began an unofficial boycott of Japanese goods by refusing to handle any imports or load any ship from the Asiatic country. Farmers generally opposed any official restrictions placed on Japan ²² but this did not deter the Government from making the various proposed defense plans more concrete.

The Imperial Conference of 1937 was of tremendous help in guiding the defense planning of the Labour Government. New Zealand delegates, at the conference, displayed grave

¹⁹New Zealand, Parliamentary Debates, CCXXXVI (1936), 560.

²⁰Wood, Political and External Affairs, p. 64.

²¹Milner, Policies in the Far East, p. 107.

²²Gordon, New Zealand Becomes a Pacific Power, pp. 89-90; Wood, Political and External Affairs, p. 65.

concern over the protection Britain could offer if the threat became a real invasion. At the opening of the conference Prime Minister Michael J. Savage stated:

I fully realize that the Dominion which I have the honour to represent is both small and distant, and that we can hope to play only a modest part in the deliberations of the conference or indeed, the affairs of the world. Nevertheless we hold definite views on many of the subjects that this conference has been called to consider . . . and it will be my function to express those views as cogently, indeed as forcibly, as I can.²³

New Zealand did play a major part when the conference began discussing Commonwealth policy in the Pacific.

Prime Minister Savage frankly told the members of the conference that his country had doubts about the protection New Zealand would receive if Britain faced enemies in both Europe and Asia.²⁴ He flatly stated that if Great Britain were pressed, she would give very little assistance to his country.²⁵ He suggested a Commonwealth body be established to determine what forces were needed and where they would be sent.²⁶

²³Great Britain, Parliamentary Papers, Vol. XII (Reports, Vol. VIII) CMD 5482, October, 1937, "Imperial Conference 1937, Summary of Proceedings," 57.

²⁴Gordon, New Zealand Becomes a Pacific Power, pp. 77-78.

²⁵Wood, Political and External Affairs, p. 67.

²⁶Gordon, New Zealand Becomes a Pacific Power, p. 78.

The British delegation denied that they would ever neglect the Pacific Commonwealth countries and reassured New Zealand that naval strength as of 1937 could handle any possible emergency. They added that Singapore was being fortified to warn the Japanese that Britain had not forgotten her obligation in the Pacific.²⁷

Prime Minister Savage, in a speech made after he returned from the conference, declared ". . . if we defended New Zealand alone we could not develop sufficient strength to pull a herring off a gridiron."²⁸ Despite the emphasis Savage placed on collective security, the conference convinced New Zealanders that more reliance must be placed on their own defensive measures. Skeptical of British reassurances, Parliament voted to expand the defense budget to £1,561,986 for the year 1937-38—an increase of £300,000 over the previous year.²⁹

Although all three services enjoyed the defense budget increase, most of the activity centered around the Air Force

²⁷Ibid., pp. 78-79. The dedication of Singapore naval base was held February 14, 1938. The base had the largest dry dock in the world, the largest floating dock in the world, and enough fuel stored for six months normal fleet operation. The base was fortified with huge guns with an estimated range of forty miles and the islands around Singapore were also fortified. For more information see "Gibraltar of the Far East," Literary Digest, January 29, 1938, pp. 8-9.

²⁸"New Zealand," The Round Table, December, 1937, p. 202.

²⁹New Zealand, Parliamentary Debates, CCLI (1938), 384.

and Army. Construction of air bases was proceeding at a rapid pace; torpedo bombers had been purchased and plans were laid for long-range bombers manned by full-time men.³⁰ The Army, consisting of over 8,000 poorly-trained reservists, planned to protect ports, repel enemy raiding parties and train new recruits.³¹ To stimulate enlistments, a three-month vocational and training program was inaugurated.³² Expansion for the Navy was in the form of two modern light cruisers on loan from Great Britain.³³

Labour officials had always assumed that in event of war the Navy and the Air Force would immediately come under British command. Contrary to the views of the former administration, however, no plans were made for use of the Army in Europe, as had been done in World War I.³⁴ In fact, on October 28, 1937, the New Zealand Government made it clear

³⁰Powles (ed.), Contemporary New Zealand, pp. 254-255.

³¹Wood, Political and External Affairs, p. 69. As of 1936 the regular Army included 84 officers and 280 other ranks. The Territorials (National Guard) consisted of 8,290 men. New Zealand, Parliamentary Debates, CCXXXVI (1936), 255.

³²Powles (ed.), Contemporary New Zealand, p. 252. The draft had been discontinued in 1930.

³³Waters, The Navy, p. 13. The two ships were of the seven thousand ton class. All the officers and half the men were from Britain, but New Zealand was responsible for all the financial aspects connected with the ships. Also see Powles (ed.), Contemporary New Zealand, p. 250.

³⁴Powles (ed.), Contemporary New Zealand, pp. 262-263; J. V. T. Baker, The New Zealand People at War (Wellington: War History Branch, Department of Internal Affairs, 1965), p. 31.

to the British that they would not promise an expeditionary force if a European war occurred.³⁵

Although Government officials generally agreed that expansion of the military forces was necessary, a sharp controversy arose over the ultimate size and goal of the defense forces. Defense Minister F. Jones, in a statement on May 17, 1938, argued that 9,000 men was an adequate army during this time of peace. He added that a total of 7,400 men were now serving, of which 41 per cent had been recently trained. The Defense Minister's optimistic statement on military strength was completely discredited on the following day when four Army Colonels stated that defense preparations were completely inadequate.³⁶

The opinion of the Colonels was supported by C. A. Berendsen, permanent head of the Prime Minister's department, who informed the newly-organized Council of Defense³⁷ that if war occurred, little assistance would come from Great Britain for months and probably even years.³⁸ The Navy spokesman at

³⁵Gordon, New Zealand Becomes a Pacific Power, p. 88.

³⁶Wood, Political and External Affairs, p. 70. The four Colonels were placed on the retirement list for breach of military ethics.

³⁷Baker, The New Zealand People at War, p. 31. This was a cabinet sub-committee, organized in 1937 to advise in defense preparations.

³⁸Wood, Political and External Affairs, p. 67.

the Council ". . . agreed that the British fleet might not come to Singapore for an indefinite period."³⁹ Thus, by the end of 1938, there seemed to be a split among both civilian and military authorities over matters of defense. Military planning, although proceeding at a rapid pace, lacked direction and leadership.

New Zealand for several years had wanted a conference with Great Britain and Australia dealing exclusively with problems concerning the defense of the South Pacific. She had always felt that there needed to be increased cooperation with Australia and also a clarification of defense procedures between the two Pacific Dominions and the mother country.⁴⁰ Now, with dissension in New Zealand over long range defense planning, a conference seemed imperative. After a great deal of persuasion, Australia and Britain finally agreed to meet in Wellington, New Zealand.

The Pacific Defense Conference met from April 14-23, 1939.⁴¹ The topic of the conference centered around Pacific relations and defense. More specifically, discussions were held on enemy action in the Pacific before the British fleet would arrive, how large enemy attacks would be, and the probable amount of damage that would occur from these attacks.⁴²

³⁹Ibid.

⁴⁰Gordon, New Zealand Becomes a Pacific Power, pp. 96-97.

⁴¹Ibid., p. 96.

⁴²Ibid., p. 98.

A majority of the meetings, however, dealt with the naval base at Singapore as the basic defense against Japanese aggression. Great Britain reassured the other members that if war broke out she would come to their aid regardless of the severity of the European crisis.⁴³ New Zealand remained very skeptical of these reassurances, but there was little that she could do to influence Great Britain's defense policy.⁴⁴

Further discussions were held on the probability of defending the smaller islands in the Pacific. New Zealand delegates maintained that if the islands surrounding their country were to fall into the hands of the Japanese, New Zealand would be subject to air attacks. It was decided that, due to the impossibility of protecting all islands, only the most strategic in relation to Commonwealth defense

⁴³Wood, Political and External Affairs, p. 76. Less than a month before the conference, the British Prime Minister sent a telegram to the Prime Minister of Australia stating that the size of the fleet at Singapore would depend on when Japan entered the war and also on the losses sustained by Great Britain, as well as her opponents. J. R. M. Butler, Grand Strategy, Vol. II, September, 1939—June, 1941, in History of the Second World War, United Kingdom Military Series, edited by J. R. M. Butler (London: H. M. Stationary Office, 1957), p. 326. An Admiralty report at this same time also stated that it would be 180 days after the outbreak of war before any relief would arrive at Singapore. Wood, Political and External Affairs, p. 67.

⁴⁴According to Gordon, British military leaders had dealt with New Zealand defense shortly before the conference. They stated that it would be in New Zealand's best interests to help reinforce Singapore. New Zealand Chiefs of Staff agreed but hesitated to send men out of the country when they believed every man was needed for defense at home. Gordon, New Zealand Becomes a Pacific Power, p. 67.

would be fortified. The other islands would have to rely on their own defenses until help arrived.⁴⁵

In relation to long-range planning, the problem of deployment of supplies was discussed. New Zealand complained that it was difficult to obtain materials since she was totally reliant on Great Britain. Australia could not help because she could barely meet her own defense requirements. Suggestions were made to solve the problem but little else was accomplished.⁴⁶

Probably the most concrete proposal that came from the conference was Britain's insistence that New Zealand step up her program of training men for home defenses. It was strongly implied that those men could also serve in other places if need be. Though this was a conference on Pacific defense, the British hinted that an Expeditionary Force might still be sent to Europe.⁴⁷ To help New Zealand, Major-General P. J. Mackesy, chief British military delegate at the conference, remained in the Dominion to report on the state of defense preparations.⁴⁸

In an interview held after the conference had ended, Prime Minister Savage reported that the dominant view at the end of the conference was the desire of the three nations to

⁴⁵Ibid., pp. 100-101; Wood, Political and External Affairs, p. 79.

⁴⁶Wood, Political and External Affairs, p. 78.

⁴⁷Ibid.

⁴⁸Ibid., pp. 79-80.

cooperate in defense.⁴⁹ He added: "We know what the conference asks us to do, and our job is to push on with it to the utmost with the principals concerned."⁵⁰

Prompted by Britain's insistence that defense preparations be expanded, the Labour Government immediately issued a call for able men to volunteer for the Army.⁵¹ This first call seemed to pass unnoticed by the public, so, a month later Prime Minister Savage issued another appeal to all men between the ages of twenty and fifty-five. Savage informed the public that the Army needed 6,000 men and added that men ages twenty to thirty-two with no military experience should volunteer for the Territorials; men between the ages twenty and fifty-five with some military experience should volunteer for the Reserves.⁵² Chief of General Staff, Major-General J. E. Duigan, in an interview, related that a force of 21,000

⁴⁹The Evening Post (Wellington), April 2, 1939, p. 10.

⁵⁰Ibid., April 26, 1939, p. 10.

⁵¹Ibid., May 15, 1939, p. 15.

⁵²Ibid., May 23, 1939, p. 8, and May 24, 1939, p. 10. The Reserves were divided into three classes of men. Class I consisted of men twenty to thirty-five years of age with two years military experience. They were to train thirty-six hours per year. Class II consisted of men thirty-five to fifty-five years with some military experience. They were to meet four times a year. The third class consisted of men of the same age only with no military experience. They were to work with engines and other special equipment. For more information, also see New Zealand, Parliamentary Debates, CCLIV (1939), 832.

men would be the goal of the expanded Army.⁵³ Enlistment, however, did not come as fast as officials expected. By the end of July there were only 898 officers and 11,017 men in the Territorials—New Zealand's first line of defense.⁵⁴

The lack of enthusiasm for volunteering led to another political crisis over the means of raising an Army. Sir James Parr, a former member of the Imperial Defense Council, declared that New Zealand needed a force of 40,000 or 50,000 men to defend herself. He contemptuously proclaimed that the Army was fortunate if they could field a force of 5,000 men.⁵⁵ Parr, along with many other people, advocated conscription as the only effective means of raising an army.⁵⁶ Prime Minister Savage, although admittedly disappointed with the lack of volunteers, announced that there was no need for conscription. He declared that he did not want men to come into the Army with the threat of war on their minds. He then pronounced, "I am not asking them to go abroad. I want them for the defense of New Zealand in New Zealand."⁵⁷

⁵³The Evening Post (Wellington), May 26, 1939, p. 10.

⁵⁴Ibid., July 20, 1938, p. 8. On July 26, Defense Minister Jones announced the regular Army would be increased to 600 men with a comparable increase in staff and artillery corps. Ibid., July 26, 1939, p. 12.

⁵⁵Ibid., April 29, 1929, p. 25.

⁵⁶Ibid., June 8, 1939, p. 9. The most outspoken conscription advocate was the Defense League. This organization began in 1936, and counted many influential parliamentarians among its members.

⁵⁷Ibid., p. 14.

Despite the preoccupation over the adequacy of the Army, definite progress was made in other branches of defense—especially the Air Force. Construction of new air bases continued at a rapid pace. Plans were made for an Air Force composed of four squadrons and 310 planes, with a standing reserve of 5,000 men to be used in case of emergency.⁵⁸ By the end of July, 1939, it was reported that the Air Force had increased fifteen-fold in men and twenty-fold in machines over the Force of 1935.⁵⁹

Beyond the expansion of ports and port facilities, little was done in relation to the Navy. The Navy knew that when war was declared, whether it be East or West, it would immediately become part of the British Royal Navy.⁶⁰

Total engrossment over defense preparation was momentarily interrupted by the Tokyo Agreement.⁶¹ The appeasement policy of Great Britain toward Japan was received with mixed feeling in New Zealand. The Reverend A. H. Nordmeyer, member of the House of Representatives, bitterly denounced it as an "Eastern Munich." He cried that the present British policy was ". . . calculated to disrupt the Empire and in the long

⁵⁸ Milner, Policies in the Far East, p. 100.

⁵⁹ The Evening Post (Wellington), July 28, 1939, p. 10.

⁶⁰ Wood, Political and External Affairs, p. 68.

⁶¹ For more information on the Tokyo Agreement see E. L. Woodward and Rohan Butler (eds.), Documents on British Foreign Policy (3rd Series; London: H. M. Stationary Office, 1949-61), IX, 304-305.

run to bring us into a disastrous war!"⁶² The concessions given to Japan did not concern New Zealand as much as the fact that she was not asked to participate in making the decision. The agreement was officially announced in New Zealand a day after it had been published in the Press. New Zealanders remarked that "If there was a Commonwealth policy in the Pacific, New Zealand had no hand in shaping it."⁶³

Opposition to the Tokyo Agreement was not, however, unanimous. Acting Prime Minister Peter Fraser,⁶⁴ stated that his Party was in complete accord with British foreign policy.⁶⁵ The Evening Post (Wellington) added that Britain could not handle Japan alone and since none of her allies were interested in helping, the mother country had no choice but to appease Japan.⁶⁶

Throughout the end of July and into August, defense build-up proceeded at a frenzied pace. The defense budget for the fiscal year 1939, announced during the first week in August, was increased £1,115,169 over the previous year. Of this increase £887,715 was given to the Army.⁶⁷ Minister of

⁶² Milner, Policies in the Far East, p. 91.

⁶³ Belshaw, New Zealand, p. 308.

⁶⁴ Fraser was assuming office in place of Savage who was quite ill at the time.

⁶⁵ Milner, Policies in the Far East, p. 91.

⁶⁶ The Evening Post (Wellington), July 26, 1939, p. 10.

⁶⁷ Ibid., August 2, 1939, p. 7.

Defense Jones reported that the Territorials, although only partially trained, were adequate to defend New Zealand, and the Air Force had enough bombers to stop any Japanese fleet.⁶⁸

During the last days of August, however, the threat of the "yellow peril" was all but forgotten. The Evening Post (Wellington) relegated the war in China to several small columns on the back pages to make room for the details of the German invasion of Poland. The deterioration of relations between Germany and Great Britain caused New Zealand to completely realign herself with British foreign and defense policy. To show the mother country that the Dominion stood by her side, Fraser announced that messages had been sent assuring Great Britain that she had the full support of New Zealand—whatever the outcome.⁶⁹ That same day, September 2, Fraser proclaimed a state of emergency and Defense Minister Jones mobilized the small standing Army.

At nine-thirty P. M., September 3, 1939, only a few hours after Britain, New Zealand also declared war.⁷⁰

⁶⁸ Ibid., August 20, 1939, p. 10.

⁶⁹ GGNZ to SSDA (information concerning the initials appears in the Appendix) in New Zealand. War History Branch. Department of Internal Affairs, Documents Relating to New Zealand's Participation in the Second World War (3 vols.; Wellington: War History Branch, Department of Internal Affairs, 1939-63), Document 3, September 2, 1939, I, 2. Hereafter cited as Documents. Also see The Evening Post (Wellington), September 2, 1939, p. 10.

⁷⁰ GGNZ to SSDA, and SSDA to GGNZ, Documents 9, 10, and 11, September 4, 1939, in Documents, I, 6-8. New Zealand did not take the official step to declare war but asked Great

Within four days the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs telegraphed the Governor-General of New Zealand outlining Britain's needs. New Zealand was to send one of her light cruisers to Britain immediately; the other was to stay and prevent attacks from armed raiders.⁷¹ Great Britain also wanted specialists of all kinds to enlist in the British Army, and, if possible, a contingent of the New Zealand Army to serve in France. The Secretary made it clear that the possibility of sending part of the Army would be based on New Zealand's estimate of Japanese neutrality.⁷² In a reply dated September 13, 1939, New Zealand stated that she would try to meet all previous requests of the mother country. She would, further, take the matter of sending troops under consideration and would be guided by the advice of the United Kingdom.⁷³

Thus, after completely realigning herself with Britain, it was only a matter of time before troops would be sent. On November 7, 1939, after talks with the Chief of the Imperial General Staff and the War Office Staff in London, it was decided that the situation in Japan was stable enough to send

Britain to inform Germany that New Zealand was also at war. Also see The Evening Post (Wellington), September 4, 1939, p. 11.

⁷¹SSDA to High Commissioner for the United Kingdom (Wellington), Document 24, September 8, 1940, in Documents, I, 17.

⁷²Ibid., pp. 18-19.

⁷³GGNZ to SSDA, Document 25, September 13, 1939, in Documents, I, 21-22.

the first echelon of slightly over 6,000 troops—the core of New Zealand's trained army.⁷⁴

⁷⁴Fraser (London) to the Prime Minister of New Zealand, Document 46, November 11, 1939, in Documents, I, 38. Britain asked for a full division but New Zealand did not have this large a force of men in combat readiness. The Dominion promised to send men in three installments or echelons of approximately 7,000 men per unit.

CHAPTER II

WAR EFFORTS AND ATTITUDES

Preparation for the forthcoming Centennial Exhibition occupied the minds of many New Zealanders in the closing months of 1939. The decision to send troops overseas had been made, but since the war was 12,000 miles away, there seemed to be little need for concern about war strategy or defense problems.¹ The Government, while not encouraging this complaisant attitude, contented itself to appealing to the people to make greater economic sacrifices and begged the young men of the country to volunteer for the service.

The first months of the new year saw little change in this attitude. The Government continually reassured the country that there would never be conscription of men for the armed forces because, in Prime Minister Savage's words, ". . . to compell men by law to defend their country is, in effect, to deny the existence of one of their strongest and noblest instincts."² With this as a guiding policy, daily appeals for volunteers were made. New Zealand men must fight

¹The Evening Post (Wellington) in November and December, 1939, reported little news of the war and even less on New Zealand defenses and the training of men for the first echelon.

²Ibid., January 29, 1940, p. 6.

to protect Britain, for if the mother country fell and could not buy exports, New Zealand, also, would fall.³ Recruitment seemed to go quite well. By the time the first echelon arrived in the Middle East in February,⁴ the second was in the process of training and Minister of Defense Jones had long since begun another campaign for men to join the third echelon.⁵ By sending the best of her young men overseas and increasing production, especially of food products, New Zealand felt that she was doing her share to combat Nazi aggression. This attitude lasted until the German blitzkrieg erupted.

Germany invaded the Lowland Countries and Norway during April and May, 1940, and by June 1, the British Expeditionary Force was being evacuated from the European continent. Struggling France, invaded by Italy, soon fell.⁶ Within a few short months German troops were looking across the English channel at unprepared, frightened Britain.

The fall of France and the threat of a United Kingdom invasion led to repercussions in the Pacific. Commonwealth

³Ibid., January 4, 1940, p. 8.

⁴General officer commanding New Zealand Expeditionary Force to Minister of Defense, Document 71, February 19, 1940, in Documents, I, 59.

⁵The Evening Post (Wellington), January 11, 1940, p. 7.

⁶New Zealand dutifully declared war on Italy at 10:30 A. M., June 10, 1940, to correspond exactly with the British declaration. GGNZ to SSDA, Document 16, June 10, 1940, in Documents, I, 11-12.

defenses in this area were shattered because Britain needed every available man and scrap of equipment to protect her shores. Japan, aware of this glorious opportunity to expand, laid plans to strike against the powers that had stifled her dreams.⁷

The formerly inexcitable attitude of New Zealanders toward the war was shaken to the very foundations by these events. In a telegram, dated June 14, the new Prime Minister, Peter Fraser,⁸ was informed that, due to the fall of France, Great Britain could not adequately defend her Dominions from Japan and therefore must rely on America for help.⁹ The next day the British Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, sent another unreassuring telegram outlining the dilemma Britain faced.¹⁰ Finally realizing that this war was not a duplicate of the Great War, New Zealand began remodeling her defenses.

One of the earliest measures for defense was the passage of the Emergency Regulations Amendment Act. The original bill, passed on September 13, 1939, gave the Government power

⁷ Oliver A. Gillespie, The Pacific (Wellington: War History Branch, Department of Internal Affairs, 1952), p. 9.

⁸ Prime Minister Savage died on March 27, 1940. Peter Fraser was then asked to form a government. See The Evening Post (Wellington), March 27, 1940, p. 10.

⁹ This was a note for the Prime Minister, not published, reviewing the European situation. Documents, III, 206n.

¹⁰ Winston S. Churchill, The Second World War, Vol. II: Their Finest Hour (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1949), pp. 194-196. Hereafter cited as Churchill, Their Finest Hour.

to control prices, prevent profiteering and provide for public safety.¹¹ An additional amendment, copied after a similar British act, was now passed giving the Government power to take any steps necessary for the successful prosecution of the war.¹² The Government did not have to consult Parliament on each step taken, but merely had to table in the House of Representatives the regulations it had made.¹³ The full extent of these emergency regulations was voiced by Fraser when he stated, "the only right and decent thing to say is that all the resources of the country, every man and woman and every coin of money and every ounce of property must be placed at . . . [the Government's] disposal for . . . defense."¹⁴ People generally approved of this tremendous advance in power, but an editorial in The Evening Post (Wellington) voiced concern that such tremendous authority be placed in the hands of only one political party. A national government, as Britain had, would be more representative of all the people.¹⁵

¹¹The Evening Post (Wellington), September 4, 1939, p. 11.

¹²New Zealand, Parliamentary Debates, CCLVII (1940), 96. Also see The Evening Post (Wellington), June 14, 1940, p. 8.

¹³"New Zealand," The Round Table, July, 1940, pp. 943-944.

¹⁴James Thorn, Peter Fraser: New Zealand's War Time Prime Minister (London: Odhams Press Ltd., 1952), p. 179. Hereafter cited as Thorn, Peter Fraser.

¹⁵The Evening Post (Wellington), June 19, 1940, p. 6.

The Labour Party, aware of these and similar sentiments, had been endeavoring to reach an agreement with the National Party for such a government. A Council of Defense had been formed in 1937, but offers to seat opposition members were immediately rejected since it was only one branch of the Government.¹⁶ The National Party was noisily demanding a voice in determining the direction of the entire country. They continually reminded the Labour Party that the war effort lacked direction; besides, with one party in power not all people had a voice in determining a direction.¹⁷

To remove this criticism of the Government, Fraser proposed a War Council of fifteen members representing industry, labor, commerce,¹⁸ and both major political parties.¹⁹ The Council's duties would be:

to determine the steps to be taken in all matters of defence, all matters connected with the giving of military assistance to Great Britain and her Allies, and all matters connected with production of goods, and the rendering of services for war purposes.²⁰

The opposition, again flatly refusing the offer, stated that such an organization was cumbersome and would lead to

¹⁶ J. M. S. Ross, Royal New Zealand Air Force (Wellington: War History Branch, Department of Internal Affairs, 1955), p. 44. Hereafter cited as Ross, Air Force.

¹⁷ Wood, Political and External Affairs, pp. 131-132.

¹⁸ Proposed membership was six members from the Executive Council, three opposition members, two men from primary industry, one farm union representative, two labor representatives, one secondary industry representative, and one member from the Returned Soldiers League. See New Zealand, Parliamentary Debates, CCLVII (1940), 171.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 168.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 287.

confusion.²¹ Fraser, however, on June 18, formally announced the organization of a War Council without opposition members²² but made it known that members of the National Party were welcome anytime they wanted to join.²³

Further efforts to quiet political unrest was a proposed War Cabinet of five members—three Labour and two National—to act in cooperation with the War Council. The duties of this Cabinet would be ". . . to consider and determine all matters relating to the Second New Zealand Expeditionary Force, His Majesty's Naval and Air Force and home defence."²⁴ Adam W. Hamilton, Leader of the Opposition, again refusing to join, stated that since the proposed cabinet did not deal with production, finance, or man power, it had limited use.²⁵ Sharp debate followed this refusal which lasted for several weeks. Finally on July 16, Fraser announced that an agreement had been reached whereby two opposition members would join the War Cabinet.²⁶ Under the agreement, production for war, war finance requirements, and any other matter concerning the war were placed on the agenda for the Cabinet's consideration.²⁷ New Zealand now had a

²¹Ibid., p. 168.

²²The Evening Post (Wellington), June 18, 1940, p. 9.

²³Ibid., p. 8.

²⁴New Zealand, Parliamentary Debates, CCLVII (1940), 168.

²⁵Ibid., pp. 168-169.

²⁶Ibid., p. 512.

²⁷Ibid.

Parliament, general Cabinet, a War Cabinet and a War Council to conduct the operations of the country.²⁸

The first problem on the agenda of the newly-formed War Council was that of conscription.²⁹ The Labour Government, as well as the general public, had been opposed to any form of conscription during the first year of the war. The fall of France, however, changed the attitudes of most people from complaisancy to favoring a full preparation of New Zealand for a greater war effort.³⁰ First indications that a conscription law might be introduced came on May 26, when Prime Minister Fraser hinted that the people might have to place themselves and their money in the service of the Government.³¹ This hint did not come as a surprise to the people. Several members of the Labour Party had been advocating conscription³² and businessmen's associations demanded that the Government institute some sort of policy.³³

²⁸One author contends that most of the war effort problems were handled in the War Cabinet without party interest or publicity interfering with the decisions. See Wood, Political and External Affairs, p. 171.

²⁹New Zealand, Parliamentary Debates, CCLVII (1940), 212-213.

³⁰Baker, The New Zealand People at War, pp. 81 and 449.

³¹Thorn, Peter Fraser, pp. 177-178. Fraser had led militant protests against conscription in World War I, and had been arrested and jailed for his subversive activities. For his World War I activities see Ibid., pp. 36-47.

³²Chief among the Labour Party advocates for conscription was Edward L. Cullen from the Hawke's Bay area. See New Zealand, Parliamentary Debates, CCLVII (1940), 265.

³³The Evening Post (Wellington), May 22, 1940, p. 11.

On June 19, Fraser stated that the War Council, rather than Parliament, would decide on the matter of compulsory military service. He argued that the Council was composed of men with the experience to handle this question—one that was much too detailed for Parliament.³⁴ The War Council, with unusual efficiency, passed a series of recommendations on June 22. These were:

1. All males nineteen to forty-six must register.
2. Selection for service be restricted to single men.
3. Territorials be brought up to war establishment and the standards be the same as the 2nd New Zealand Expeditionary force.
4. Voluntary enlistment, with the exception of the Air Force, cease July 22.
5. Only men twenty-one to forty-one should be taken for overseas service; this included men serving in the Territorials.³⁵

From these recommendations a conscription procedure was organized and administered by the National Service Department. Men were conscripted from the General Reserve of all males over age sixteen. Those eligible for service were divided into three divisions. The first being single men eighteen to forty-five; the second being married men eighteen to forty-five; and the third—all other men.³⁶ The men, after an examination, would be divided into four medical classes. Class I was fit for overseas service; Class II was fit for service only in New Zealand; Class III was fit for

³⁴New Zealand, Parliamentary Debates, CCLVII (1940), 212-213.

³⁵The Evening Post (Wellington), June 22, 1940, p. 12.

³⁶New Zealand, Parliamentary Debates, CCLVII (1940), 251.

would be garrisoned by men too young for the Expeditionary Force, returned soldiers too old to go overseas, by men without any previous military service, or those unfit for the Expeditionary Force.⁴³

Mounted troops as a defense force were also being considered by the Government. In a speech in the House of Representatives, C. A. Wilkinson, member of Parliament, charged that the Government had turned down the services of fourteen or fifteen hundred horsemen. He remarked that New Zealand, with its extensive coastline, was not in a position to turn down the services of anyone. Mounted troops, according to Wilkinson, would be most helpful because of their mobility and their ability to live off the land.⁴⁴ After a series of debates about the efficiency of such troops and their ability to fight a modern war, it was publicly announced that nine mounted units would be formed for New Zealand defense.⁴⁵

Even with the rapid build-up, the armed forces were still inadequate. This fact was made undeniably clear by Frank Langstone, Minister of External Affairs, in a speech before the House of Representatives. He stated that 21,000 men were already serving with the Expeditionary Force and

⁴³Ibid., June 10, 1940, p. 11.

⁴⁴New Zealand, Parliamentary Debates, CCLVII (1940), 352-353.

⁴⁵The Evening Post (Wellington), July 16, 1940, p. 10.

more would be needed. Many of these men were taken from Territorial ranks and could not be replaced until after the entire Expeditionary Force had been trained. Thus it would be at least two or three months before any type of force could be trained adequately for the defense of New Zealand.⁴⁶

The anxiety and nakedness New Zealand felt after the fall of France was increased by the deterioration of Japanese-British relations. On June 26, Britain informed the Dominion that Japan was about to ask the United Kingdom to close the Burma Road. Because the United States was eminently involved in supplying China, Britain first asked the Americans what help they would offer in this crisis.⁴⁷ The British felt there were two answers to the problem. One was to close the Road for three months to any large freight volume like that which had passed over the road the past year; the second was to negotiate a general settlement in China. If the British Government was to take any stand against Japan, they would hope that the United States would join in trying to negotiate a general settlement and also transport a part of their Pacific fleet to Singapore as a show of unified force.⁴⁸ The

⁴⁶ New Zealand, Parliamentary Debates, CCLVII (1940), 250-251.

⁴⁷ SSDA to GGNZ, Document 1, June 26, 1940, in Documents, III, 1-4.

⁴⁸ Cordell Hull, The Memoirs of Cordell Hull (2 vols.; New York: The Macmillan Company, 1948), I, 897 and 900. Hereafter cited as Hull, Memoirs. Also see SSDA to GGNZ, Document 2, July 2, 1940, in Documents, III, 5.

American Government replied that sending a force to Singapore would leave the Atlantic uncomfortably open. They added that strong economic pressure was already being applied on Japan; besides, the United States did not believe in giving concessions to a country at the expense of a third power.⁴⁹ Such a rebuff of hopeful joint action between the United States and Britain left the latter very little choice. On July 11, after consulting her Dominions, Britain announced that the Burma Road would be closed for the three months during the rainy season.⁵⁰

New Zealand did not like any thought of making concessions to Japan. While talks between the United States and Britain were in progress, the Dominion informed the mother country that she fully agreed with the decision to get a clear-cut definition of policy from the Americans, but she felt that Britain should show a measure of confidence in her relations with Japan—rather than conciliation and weakness.⁵¹ On receiving word that the Burma Road was closed, the New Zealand Government voiced apprehension over the possibility of alienating the United States and bluntly added ". . . we neither understand nor sympathize with the policy

⁴⁹Hull, Memoirs, I, 897-898.

⁵⁰SSDA to GGNZ, Document 5, July 11, 1940, in Documents, III, 10-11. The Burma Road was closed from July 17 to October 17.

⁵¹Ibid., Document 3, July 3, 1940, pp. 8-9.

that has been adopted vis-à-vis Japan. . . ."52 To soften these remarks the Government added that they did not mean to add to the difficulties of the United Kingdom ". . . whose decision on this difficult matter we have accepted in the past and will no doubt accept in the future."53

To New Zealanders the Far Eastern situation looked very grave, so bleak, in fact, that when the Government received notice that troop carriers were on their way to pick up the third echelon,⁵⁴ it was apprehensive about releasing them. This decision proved difficult. If the third echelon was sent, the country would be entirely denuded of a fully-trained army. A long coastline and many harbors made the country particularly vulnerable to attack, and with untrained men and few arms she would be easy prey. On the other hand, it was felt that, since the war was not in the Far East, the Dominion would stand or fall according to decisions being made in battles at the main theaters of the war.⁵⁵ After long deliberation, it was decided that the troops must be sent to supplement the first echelon in Egypt so the New Zealanders could form a fighting force in the Middle East.⁵⁶

⁵²GGNZ to SSDA, Document 8, July 30, 1940, Ibid., 15.

⁵³Ibid.

⁵⁴SSDA to GGNZ, Document 223, July 30, 1940, Ibid., I, 169.

⁵⁵GGNZ to SSDA, Document 224, August 3, 1940, Ibid., 171-173.

⁵⁶Ibid. The second echelon had been, despite the protests of the New Zealand Government, diverted to England

Troops that were to act as reinforcements would be held back, however, and dispatched to the Fiji Islands to organize a front line defense there.⁵⁷

The telegram informing Britain of the decision to send the third echelon had just been sent when the Prime Minister received a message stating that the British Combined Chiefs of Staff were preparing a report of the Pacific situation.⁵⁸ Churchill, in the telegram, announced that if Japan declared war on the British Empire, an early attempt to invade Australia or New Zealand was considered unlikely. It was believed that Japan was either too occupied in China or would seek out the rich prizes offered by the Netherlands East Indies. Furthermore, if Japan did move in the direction of the South Pacific Dominions, the long lines of communication would make invasion extremely hazardous.⁵⁹ If the Pacific Dominions were threatened, Churchill added, all

to help repel the expected invasion. They arrived June 21, and were not expected to join their twin in the Middle East for some time. It was hoped that the third echelon would increase the size of the Middle East force enough to make it an efficient fighting unit. For more information on the second echelon see GGNZ to SSDA, Document 129, May 2, 1940, Ibid., 98.

⁵⁷ GGNZ to SSDA, Document 224, August 3, 1940, Ibid., 171-173. The troops held back numbered 3,050. This meant 287 officers, 53 nurses and 5,791 other ranks departed for the Middle East.

⁵⁸ SSDA to the High Commissioner for the United Kingdom (Wellington), Document 2, August 11, 1940, Ibid., III, 17.

⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 18.

available British ships would move from the Mediterranean to the Far East. He went on to outline the state of British defenses in an effort to show New Zealand that the United Kingdom was continually growing stronger.⁶⁰

The next day, the New Zealand Government received the report entitled "Appreciation by the United Kingdom Chiefs of Staff on the Situation in the Far East, August, 1940."⁶¹ The first part of the report stated that Japanese advances in Southern China and Hainan, the situation in Indo-China, the development of communications and air bases in Thailand, and new long-range aircraft increased the threat to Malaya, which the arrival of a fleet could only partially protect. The fall of France, the threat to Britain, and combating both the German and the Italian Navy made it almost impossible for the British to even send a fleet to the Far East.⁶²

The report next dealt with possible invasion points. It was estimated that Japan might attack British possessions with Malaya and Singapore as her first target. Under this assumption, New Zealand and Australia would be threatened, but not until Japan had consolidated her gains both in China and Malaya. "The Rising Sun" might also decide to penetrate Indo-China and Thailand in a move west, or might attack the

⁶⁰Ibid.

⁶¹SSDA to the High Commissioner for the United Kingdom (Wellington), Appendix IV, August 12, 1940, Ibid., 540-552.

⁶²Ibid., p. 540.

Dutch East Indies. Another possible invasion point was the Philippines, but this was considered unlikely since Japan would not want to incur the wrath of the United States.⁶³

To carry out an attack on any of these probable targets, it was estimated Japan had ten battleships, three to seven aircraft carriers, with the necessary number of destroyers and cruisers, six to ten divisions of men available, 218 carrier-borne planes, and 432 land-based aircraft.⁶⁴ To combat such a force, Britain had in the Far East a small, inadequate fleet,⁶⁵ eighty-eight first-line aircraft, and a handful of men.⁶⁶

If Japan should strike at Malaya—and at this time it seemed obvious that they would do so—the British would need the help of the Dutch. With the combined forces of the more modern Netherlands Pacific air and sea forces, a stronger defense of the Far East could be made.⁶⁷ The cooperation of the Dutch was not a certain fact, however, nor were the British sure they would help if the Netherlands' Indies were attacked. Throughout the report it was stated in emphatic

⁶³Ibid., pp. 543-545.

⁶⁴Ibid., p. 543.

⁶⁵Ibid., p. 552. Britain had one 8-inch cruiser, one 6-inch cruiser, six armed merchant ships, five old destroyers, and a number of smaller vessels.

⁶⁶Ibid., pp. 550-551. Of the eighty-eight aircraft, about half were obsolete. There were nine British battalions stationed in Malaya.

⁶⁷Ibid., pp. 550 and 553. The Dutch had 144 first-line aircraft, two cruisers, seven destroyers and sixteen submarines at their disposal.

terms that any cooperation with the Netherlands was only an assumption.⁶⁸

This rather bleak outlook of Far Eastern defenses was soon followed by an announcement that Japan had signed a pact with Germany and Italy.⁶⁹ The tripartite agreement was aimed at the United States but an ominous threat to the British Empire could not be mistaken. Telegrams, sent daily to New Zealand, informed her of the situation and stated that if the United States went to war with Japan, the United Kingdom might follow.⁷⁰ The Government replied that, if the United States found themselves at war as a result of concerted action with the British Commonwealth over issues in the Far East, the Commonwealth should most certainly join America in declaring war.⁷¹

It now appeared to the New Zealand Government that any month might mean invasion with few trained men to stop the invader. Efforts to increase home defenses received

⁶⁸ Ibid., pp. 548-551.

⁶⁹ F. C. Jones, Japan's New Order in East Asia, 1937-45 (London and others: Oxford University Press, 1954), p. 199. Hereafter cited as Jones, Japan's New Order. The Pact was signed September 27, 1940. See also SSDA to GGNZ, Document 17, October 3, 1940, in Documents, III, 28-29.

⁷⁰ SSDA to the High Commissioner for the United Kingdom (Wellington), Documents 19 and 20, October 8, 1940, in Documents, III, 31.

⁷¹ GGNZ to SSDA, Document 21, October 9, 1940, Ibid., 31.

renewed vigor. It was announced that changes would be made so that the Territorials could be mobilized more rapidly. This group of men was to be expanded as rapidly as facilities could be arranged to train them; 40,000 to 50,000 men, including reinforcements for the Expeditionary Force, was the training goal for the near future.⁷² Minister of National Service, Robert Semple, also announced that a Home Guard, composed of men not eligible for Territorial or overseas service, would be created⁷³ and taught the basics of combat as well as the geography of their own country. As these men progressed in training, their duties would be beach patrols, guarding vital points, making maps of areas not outlined by the regular Army, and, if invasion did come, would oppose enemy landings in isolated areas until mobile Army units arrived.⁷⁴ The Home Guard would be equipped with weapons not used by the Army. The acute shortage of equipment meant that all men would not have rifles, but it was hoped that by the end of the year this problem would be alleviated.⁷⁵

⁷²The Evening Post (Wellington), October 7, 1940, p. 8.

⁷³Ibid., October 3, 1940, p. 13. The Home Guard was modeled after a like organization in Britain. New Zealand already had a Military Reserve which received some training, but this new organization largely overshadowed it. It was conceivable, however, for a man to belong to both—as did many returned soldiers. This confusion was not ended until February, 1942, when the National Military Reserve was incorporated into the Home Guard. See The Evening Post (Wellington), February 4, 1942, p. 6.

⁷⁴Ibid., December 3, 1940, p. 5.

⁷⁵Ibid.

In addition to the increase in the Army, The Emergency Precautions Scheme (EPS) and the Women's War Service Auxiliary (WWSA) were also organized. The EPS, though not an entirely new organization,⁷⁶ was expanded to receive all people who could not join the armed forces. The organization's duties were taking care of the wounded, fighting fires, transportation, sanitation, and other civil defense duties. The WWSA would do much the same thing only in a more limited sense.⁷⁷

Concentration on building mine sweepers was the goal of the New Zealand Navy. A German raider had mined several approaches to Auckland Harbor in June,⁷⁸ and at this time, there were only four over-aged fishing trawlers used as sweepers.⁷⁹ The Government, therefore, embarked on an extensive program that ultimately resulted in adequate mine sweeper protection.⁸⁰

⁷⁶New Zealand, Parliamentary Debates, CCLVII (1940), 99-100. Organized under the Defense Act of 1909, the EPS was under civilian control until an invasion would automatically place it under Army command. See also Nash, A Working Democracy, p. 88. Nash states that the EPS was organized in 1931.

⁷⁷New Zealand, Parliamentary Debates, CCLVII (1940), 100. See also The Evening Post (Wellington), October 3, 1940, p. 13.

⁷⁸Waters, The Navy, pp. 119-120, also 170. Two hundred twenty-eight moored contact mines were laid.

⁷⁹Ibid., p. 195.

⁸⁰Ibid., p. 176. Between October, 1940, and the end of the war, New Zealand built thirteen sweepers at a cost of £780,000.

The German raider in New Zealand waters also made apparent the need for long-range aircraft.⁸¹ Early in the war the Dominion had asked Britain for eighteen modern aircraft if the situation with Japan became worse; in May the United Kingdom agreed that eighteen aircraft would be released from her orders in the United States.⁸² These planes apparently did not come, for on November 28, Prime Minister Fraser informed Britain that a German raider had attacked another New Zealand ship. Only two planes could travel the distance to defend her and these, occupied elsewhere, were eight hours late in arriving. Even if the planes arrived in time, Fraser stated, they had no effective weapons to destroy the attacker. He pleaded with the British Government to send aircraft of any type to remedy this helpless situation.⁸³ After receiving a refusal,⁸⁴ Fraser sent another telegram reminding Churchill that New Zealand had voluntarily released bomber orders at the start of the war to help in the defense of the mother country.⁸⁵ New Zealand, conveyed

⁸¹Ross, Air Force, p. 69. New Zealand apparently did not have any aircraft with a range of over four hundred miles.

⁸²Ibid., pp. 68-69. Britain had promised fifty modern training craft, but due to the shortage in airplanes, they did not arrive.

⁸³GGNZ to SSDA, Document 189, November 28, 1940, in Documents, III, 213.

⁸⁴SSDA to GGNZ, Document 190, December 2, 1940, Ibid., 214.

⁸⁵GGNZ to SSDA, Document 191, December 4, 1940, Ibid. New Zealand had thirty Wellington bombers on order but canceled the order so Britain could have them.

the Prime Minister, would not be in such a helpless position if the bombers had come. A half dozen planes were all that the Dominion would want—enough to frighten off raiders. These planes would even be available for the defense of Singapore.⁸⁶ In a reply outlining the glowing exploits of the New Zealand Expeditionary Force, Churchill told Fraser that bombers could not be taken away from the defense of England.⁸⁷ The small Dominion had no where else to turn for aircraft. True, she had an agreement with the United States to buy craft,⁸⁸ but Britain received priority. New Zealand would have to suffer.

Without planes the defense of the Fiji Islands, 1,000 miles away, seemed an unsurmountable task. It was decided, however, that these islands should be fortified as the first line of defense for New Zealand. Over 2,000 reinforcements

⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 215.

⁸⁷ SSDA to GGNZ, Document 192, December 14, 1940, Ibid., p. 216.

⁸⁸ U. S., Statutes at Large, LIV, Part 2, 2263-2277. Mutual agreement signed at Wellington January 30, and February 28, 1940, for the importation of civil aircraft into New Zealand. This was only the first attempt to secure better relations with the United States. In July, at the height of the crisis, Fraser asked the British Government to relay a message asking the American Government if they would be interested in exchanging diplomats. Due to other pressing matters and the coolness of Britain toward this idea, it was five months before the American Government was informed of the message. Again there was a delay, but finally, on January 23, 1941, the Wellington Government announced that a New Zealand representative would be sent to America. On February 14, 1941, Walter Nash, chosen for the post, presented his credentials to Roosevelt. For details see Wasserman, "The United States and New Zealand," pp. 267-272.

were sent,⁸⁹ but even when joined with the native troops, the force seemed pitifully small. Planes had been sent in August, but they were merely four in number and then, were only trainers.⁹⁰ Other defense equipment was in short supply, so short, in fact, that three old guns were salvaged from a Public Works storehouse and parts were confiscated from a museum to make them work.⁹¹

Government appeals for the people to join in the defense of the country were met by an indifferent attitude. There were few men who volunteered for the Home Guard; the other organizations had even more trouble obtaining recruits.⁹² Plans were formulated to dig trenches and shelters around Wellington, but no one would volunteer to help.⁹³ People viewed the defense measures as a chance for men to play soldiers and treated the organizations as such.⁹⁴ The attitude of the people in the closing months of 1940 was not entirely their fault. Replacements for the Expeditionary Force were balloted in December and would be sent away to

⁸⁹Minister of Defense to General Bernard Freyberg, Commander, 2nd New Zealand Expeditionary Force, Document 38, October 12, 1940, in Documents, II, 29.

⁹⁰Ross, Air Force, pp. 70-72.

⁹¹Gillespie, The Pacific, p. 23.

⁹²The Evening Post (Wellington), December 7, 1940, p. 12.

⁹³Ibid., December 6, 1940, p. 6.

⁹⁴Ibid., November 11, 1940, p. 6.

fight a distant war.⁹⁵ Fraser's Christmas message spoke of peace and victory.⁹⁶ The Minister of National Service, Sample, stated that 200,000 men would be in the Home Guard by early 1941.⁹⁷ This would surely be enough men to defend a small country. The Evening Post (Wellington) related the glowing exploits of the British Royal Air Force in the battle for Britain, but said little of Japanese movements in the Pacific. Yet the signs were ominous.

Britain was in a very tenuous position. She could neither strongly oppose Japan diplomatically, nor could she adequately help the Pacific Commonwealth should they be attacked. Japan was forced to move south in search of materials to sustain her war economy.⁹⁸ New Zealand had few trained men and, even more critical, few if any modern weapons. On December 29, 1940, Roosevelt announced plans

⁹⁵Ibid., October 17, 1940, p. 4.

⁹⁶Thorn, Peter Fraser, p. 184.

⁹⁷The Evening Post (Wellington), December 21, 1940, p. 10.

⁹⁸Samuel Eliot Morison, History of United States Naval Operations in World War II, Vol. III, The Rising Sun in the Pacific, 1931—April—1942 (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1948), p. 60. Hereafter cited as Morison, The Rising Sun. The United States had cut Japanese supplies tremendously by enforcing several embargoes. On June 5, 1940, strategic minerals, chemicals, as well as aircraft engines, parts and other air equipment were stopped. Aviation fuel, lubricants, and certain classes of iron and steel materials were halted on July 26. A complete embargo of all steel was enforced September 30, 1940.

for a lend-lease program to the Allies.⁹⁹ Fraser, expressing his joy, exclaimed "never in history . . . [has] there been a pronouncement by a nation not actually engaged in warfare so sweeping, effective and helpful."¹⁰⁰ The Prime Minister undoubtedly felt that this new American program would relieve the critical weapon shortage. Any effective lend-lease help, however, was almost beyond sight while the clouds of a Far Eastern war were moving dangerously close to New Zealand.

⁹⁹Thorn, Peter Fraser, p. 185.

¹⁰⁰Ibid.

CHAPTER III

JAPAN MOVES SOUTH

Events early in the new year, 1941, persuaded Japan to expand her area of conquest. The United States embargo of goods stifled the economy of the "Rising Sun," attempting to force her to submit to the will of the western power. To break this strangle hold, Japan turned hungrily toward her rich, weak southwestern neighbors.¹ With the help of Germany she forced French Indo-China into agreements which eventually gave her the needed military bases for the conquest of the mineral rich Netherlands East Indies.²

New Zealanders, informed, but only mildly concerned about previous Japanese movements, now received daily warnings of the grave threat to their security.³ In a speech on February 14, 1941, Prime Minister Fraser warned that the tide of war was nearing New Zealand's shores⁴ and, although he did not specifically mention Japan, his strong implication

¹Hull, Memoirs, II, 983.

²Jones, Japan's New Order, pp. 235-238.

³The Evening Post (Wellington), February 11, 1941, p. 7; February 14, p. 6; February 25, p. 7; February 27, p. 8.

⁴Ibid., February 14, 1941, p. 8.

left no doubt in the minds of his countrymen. That same day an editorial in The Evening Post (Wellington) warned of the menace of Japan. It urged the New Zealand people to become united and dedicate themselves entirely to the war effort.⁵

Despite the naïve outlook of the people and strong opposition of some members of Parliament,⁶ the Labour Government continued to step up defense preparations—turning first to the Army. The standing Army was increased by keeping all men who had just finished their basic training on active duty rather than allowing them to return home and train only on weekends.⁷ Greater expansion was guaranteed by relaxing regulations for age and physical fitness. All single men ages eighteen to forty-five were required to enroll for the service.⁸ Future Territorials would be drawn from these, and instead of taking only those men in the best physical condition, men who had previously been rejected for overseas service because of minor disabilities were now ordered to

⁵Ibid., p. 6.

⁶New Zealand, Parliamentary Debates, CCLIX (1941), 156. T. F. Doyle, member of the Legislative Council, stated that Japan did not have the ability to expand the war because of food, industrial and manpower shortages.

⁷The Evening Post (Wellington), March 3, 1941, p. 8. Previously, men returned home after training and waited for orders to be called back into the service as they were needed.

⁸Ibid., March 25, 1941, p. 10. Exceptions to this were Maoris, aliens and conscientious objectors.

join one of the civil defense branches.⁹ It was decided that married men ages eighteen to forty-five should register for the service in May and would form a second division of the General Reserve.¹⁰ As Japanese intentions became clearer in May, the Government decided that eighteen-year-olds would be called up to serve with the Territorials or the Home Guard.¹¹ Married men without children, though now enrolled, would not be conscripted until the end of the year.¹²

The Home Guard was also in the process of being re-organized. Because of the diversity of age between the men in the organization, training geared to the ages of the men was instituted.¹³ The Government was also formulating plans to have all personnel in the Guard drafted, as were the men in the regular Army.¹⁴ The biggest problem concerning the

⁹Ibid., p. 11. Grades of men taken were 1, 1a and 2, out of a possible five grades.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 10. All single men formed the first division of the General Reserve. Men with three children were at this time exempted from the service.

¹¹Ibid., May 22, 1941, p. 11. As soon as men reached the age of nineteen they were usually sent overseas.

¹²Ibid., June 15, 1941, p. 8. Instead of placing men with three or more children on the deferred list, men were now graded according to the number of children they had. Conceivably then, no physically fit man was exempt from the service.

¹³Ibid., March 26, 1941, p. 7.

¹⁴Ibid., May 1, 1941, p. 11. The Home Guard was a volunteer organization except for men who were unfit for the overseas force and the Territorials. These men were ordered to join the Guard. Most of the members, however, were veterans of World War I and older men.

Home Guard was not enticing the men to join, but acquiring enough weapons to arm them.¹⁵ A member of Parliament branded them a "broomstick force." He stated that although the enrollment figure had reached 100,000, only older men attended the evening and weekend drills because younger men had grown weary of the game of marching when there were few rifles and no other means of defending themselves if the enemy did come.¹⁶ To alleviate this problem, Fraser, as early as February, appealed to the people owning British .303 rifles to give them to the Army.¹⁷ The Government, due to the poor response, later ordered all people owning such rifles to give them to the Army at once.¹⁸ Even with these conscripted weapons, the Home Guard was still poorly armed.

The Emergency Precautions Scheme was next to come under the scrutiny of the Government. This organization was expanded to include an Emergency Fire Service. Men, unfit for military service, were asked to volunteer and train to help the regular fire department in all emergencies.¹⁹

¹⁵Ibid., April 21, 1941, p. 9. The Home Guard was, at this time, estimated at 98,500.

¹⁶New Zealand, Parliamentary Debates, CCLIX (1941), 295-296. Sir Apirana Ngata, Member of Parliament, was speaking. He was not exaggerating. In one detachment of eighty troops there were only seven rifles. See The Evening Post (Wellington), April 1, 1941, p. 10.

¹⁷The Evening Post (Wellington), February 20, 1941, p. 11.

¹⁸Ibid., May 3, 1941, p. 8.

¹⁹Ibid., April 4, 1941, p. 5.

Lighting restrictions were other measures taken to protect the people and the country. In February, Fraser announced that New Zealand, modeling themselves after Great Britain, would install air raid sirens, and restrictions on house and automobile lights would soon be forthcoming.²⁰ Mild lighting restrictions were soon announced and were gradually increased until coastal cities had a bare minimum of lighting at night.²¹ Shaded head lights were mandatory for all automobiles and even harsher vehicle lighting restrictions were enforced in coastal cities.²²

The international situation created maximum efforts in war manufacture. British war material supply to New Zealand was severely limited, forcing New Zealand to launch several new enterprises in an effort to better equip her Army. Tanks were her first concern. To remedy an almost complete lack of this war machine, caterpillar tractors were armoured and machine guns mounted on them. This makeshift tank was quite crude and clumsy because of its heavy weight and slow speed, but this handicap was counteracted by

²⁰Ibid., February 21, 1941, p. 8.

²¹Ibid., May 21, 1941, p. 10. There were few street lights and all shop windows had to be shaded and could use a maximum of one sixty-watt bulb. Porch lights on resident houses were not allowed.

²²Ibid., June 10, 1941, p. 10; June 28, 1941, p. 10.

providing huge transport trucks to carry them rapidly to any part of the country.²³

Mobility for protection of New Zealand's long coastline was increased by the manufacture of carriages for both light and heavy guns. The heavy gun carriages, made from truck parts and mounted on truck tires, were capable of moving thirty-five miles per hour on roads and twelve miles per hour overland.²⁴ Machine gun carriers, known as Bren Carriers, were tracked vehicles manufactured from British imported parts.²⁵

Some munitions for the armed forces were also made in New Zealand. Concentrated efforts were made to manufacture small arms ammunition, but the grenade was the Dominion's most important war product.²⁶ Many factors, however, hampered this phase of defense, making it impossible for New Zealand to reach high productive levels. Raw materials, machine tools, and technical ability were either non-existent or were in such limited supply that output was always quite small.²⁷

²³Ibid., March 31, 1941, p. 8. The tank weighed twenty-five tons and moved at a top speed of six miles per hour. The New Zealand Army seldom had enough vehicles, so whenever carriers of any kind were needed they were usually impressed from the people. See Ibid., March 10, 1941, p. 9 or July 18, 1941, p. 6.

²⁴Ibid., April 4, 1941, p. 8. These were made for 60-pounders or 6-inch howitzers.

²⁵Ibid., February 4, 1941, p. 5.

²⁶Ibid. ²⁷Ibid., March 4, 1941, p. 8.

By mid-year, defenses had been greatly strengthened in comparison to the past year. When her defenses were compared with the sophisticated weapons of the major warring powers, however, the small Dominion was almost naked.²⁸ Her Air Force was small and consisted almost entirely of obsolete planes;²⁹ the Navy was composed largely of small craft, and the 145,000 man home defense force was only partially trained and meagerly equipped.³⁰ Acutely aware of her defenseless position if Japan became an enemy, New Zealand refused to become just another small island in British and American Pacific war strategical plans. She demanded a voice and participated in many of the conferences that dealt with the Asian problem.

New Zealand, in January and February, sent representatives to Washington to participate in what was later known as the ABC-1 Staff Agreements. The conference was primarily concerned with the war in Europe, but some resolutions concerning the Far East were discussed. It was agreed that the United States would increase its fleet in the Atlantic to

²⁸ Gillespie, The Pacific, p. 4. In June, 1941, coastal defenses consisted of two 6-inch and two 4-inch guns.

²⁹ Ross, Air Force, p. 77.

³⁰ The Evening Post (Wellington), May 23, 1941, p. 8. Territorial strength at this time was 45,000. With one hundred thousand Home Guardsmen, this would appear to be an adequate force. The Territorials, however, were continually drained to go overseas, and even they, due to a lack of weapons, were usually only partially trained.

allow the British to move a part of their fleet to Singapore. In addition, the American Pacific fleet would extend its patrols further south to protect British islands in the South Pacific.³¹ Too small to have a commanding voice in these proceedings, New Zealand agreed with the resolutions but added that she hoped ". . . every possible step would be taken to expedite the arrival of the main fleet at Singapore . . .".³²

Singapore, the hub of British Far Eastern defenses, was the scene of another conference in April.³³ Proposals were exchanged on the deployment of combined naval forces in the Indian and Pacific Oceans. Discussions also centered on Luzon in the Northern Philippines and other probable bases of attack against Japan. It was suggested that if Luzon fell the United States fleet would withdraw to Singapore; however, no political commitments to this effect were reached.³⁴ For the Americans this conference was a great disappointment because the countries involved, namely New Zealand, Australia and the Netherlands Indies, were primarily concerned with local waters, whereas the United States

³¹Herbert Feis, The Road to Pearl Harbor; The Coming of the War between the United States and Japan (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1940), pp. 165-168. Hereafter cited as Feis, Road to Pearl Harbor.

³²Acting Prime Minister of New Zealand to SSDA, Document 24, May 21, 1941, in Documents, III, 34.

³³Gillespie, The Pacific, p. 14.

³⁴Ibid.

wanted a broad strategical plan for the whole area.³⁵

Though little was accomplished, problems and proposals concerning the ever-increasing Japanese menace were aired.

These conferences were indicative of Japanese pressures being exerted. The German invasion of Russia on June 22 forced Japan to make a decision. She must either support Germany by also invading Russia, or move south. On July 2, chief Japanese military and civil figures came together and plans were officially made to move south.³⁶ French Indo-China was singled out as the first goal and was to be occupied as soon as possible. On July 14, Japan presented her demands to the Vichy Government.³⁷ After several days of impatient waiting the French Government was told that unless an answer to the Japanese ultimatum was received immediately, Japanese troops would invade the entire country. On July 24, the French yielded; the same day 40,000 Japanese troops moved into southern Indo-China.³⁸

The American and British governments were completely aware of what was occurring because the Japanese code had

³⁵Morison, The Rising Sun, pp. 54-55. For more detail of the conference see Maurice Matloff and Edwin M. Snell, Strategic Planning for Coalition Warfare, 1941-1942, in UNITED STATES ARMY IN WORLD WAR II (Washington: Office of Chief of Military History, Department of Army, 1953), pp. 65-67. Hereafter cited as Matloff and Snell, Strategic Planning.

³⁶Feis, Road to Pearl Harbor, p. 215.

³⁷Ibid. Also see Jones, Japan's New Order, pp. 260-261.

³⁸Jones, Japan's New Order, p. 262.

been broken.³⁹ On July 5,⁴⁰ and again on July 15,⁴¹ Fraser was informed of Japanese probable intentions. When the occupation of Indo-China did occur, voluminous correspondence passed between Britain and her Dominions on possible ways to retaliate for such seemingly open aggression.

The British Government offered two retaliatory measures to be decided upon in conjunction with her Dominions. The first resolution called for restrictions on Japanese shipping facilities in Malaya; the other contemplated denouncing the long-standing commercial treaty.⁴² The New Zealand Government replied that they agreed with the proposal to abrogate the treaty and would do so as soon as word was received that the mother country gave her consent.⁴³ The small Dominion, however, would have preferred a somewhat stronger stand. She suggested a joint declaration be made by the Netherlands East Indies, Britain, the United States, and the Pacific Dominions stating any future move south, affecting

³⁹Ibid., p. 263.

⁴⁰SSDA to Acting Prime Minister of New Zealand, Document 25, July 5, 1941, in Documents, III, 35. Prime Minister Fraser was in London at this time.

⁴¹SSDA to Acting Prime Minister of New Zealand, Document 28, July 15, 1941, Ibid., p. 38.

⁴²SSDA to Acting Prime Minister of New Zealand, Document 26, July 9, 1941, Ibid., p. 36. The commercial treaty was signed in 1911.

⁴³Acting Prime Minister of New Zealand to SSDA, Document 29, July 16, 1941, Ibid., p. 39.

the security of the above countries, might be regarded as an attack upon all. If the United States would not join, New Zealand felt that such a proposal should be made anyway, thus making it clear to Japan the exact position of the other countries.⁴⁴ The joint declaration was not forthcoming, but the Commercial Agreement was abrogated July 25 in Britain and July 27 in New Zealand.⁴⁵

The United States decided that, as a retaliatory measure, Japanese assets would be frozen.⁴⁶ Britain immediately contemplated doing the same and informed the Dominions of her intentions.⁴⁷ The New Zealand Government replied that while they were aware of the tense situation which greater economic sanctions might cause, it was felt that close cooperation with the United States was necessary in every endeavor to deter Japan.⁴⁸ After further consideration, Britain, New Zealand, and the Dutch also froze Japanese assets.⁴⁹

⁴⁴ Acting Prime Minister of New Zealand to SSDA, Document 31, July 16, 1941, Ibid., p. 40.

⁴⁵ SSDA to Acting Prime Minister of New Zealand, Document 41, July 25, 1941, Ibid., p. 50. Acting Prime Minister to SSDA, Document 43, July 27, 1941, Ibid., p. 50.

⁴⁶ Matloff and Snell, Strategic Planning, p. 65.

⁴⁷ SSDA to Acting Prime Minister of New Zealand, Document 35, July 22, 1941, in Documents, III, 44.

⁴⁸ Acting Prime Minister of New Zealand to Rt. Hon. P. Fraser (London), Document 37, July 24, 1941, Ibid., p. 47.

⁴⁹ Matloff and Snell, Strategic Planning, p. 65. Also see The Evening Post (Wellington), July 28, 1941, pp. 8 and 9.

The new economic restrictions seriously affected the Japanese economy. By a single blow, three-quarters of her foreign trade was severed. Reserves of oil, essential in fighting a war, were estimated to last between eighteen months and two years.⁵⁰ Japan had two alternatives. She must either slowly withdraw her forces from China and accept defeat or take what she needed. She chose force.

Britain had just made the decision to impose economic restrictions when word was received that Japan intended to occupy Thailand.⁵¹ Prime Minister Churchill immediately informed the Dominions that the British Ambassador in Washington was instructed to ask the United States Government to join in a communique with the British Commonwealth warning Japan that grave consequences would occur if the "Rising Sun" took such action. American concurrence to such a proposal, Churchill added, might be difficult to get.⁵² The New Zealand Government, preferring a wait-and-see policy with Japan before deciding upon a course of action,⁵³ replied

⁵⁰J. R. M. Butler, Grand Strategy, Vol. III, pt. 2, June, 1941—August, 1942 in History of the Second World War, United Kingdom Military Series, edited by J. R. M. Butler (London: H. M. Stationary Office, 1964), 246-247. Also see Feis, Road to Pearl Harbor, p. 252.

⁵¹SSDA to Acting Prime Minister of New Zealand, Document 44, August 1, 1941, in Documents, III, 51.

⁵²SSDA to Acting Prime Minister of New Zealand, Document 45, August 1, 1941, Ibid., p. 52 and 52n.

⁵³Acting Prime Minister of New Zealand to the Prime Minister of Australia, Document 48, August 14, 1941, Ibid., p. 57. This telegram was repeated to the Secretary of State

that ". . . it would seem unwise to take such action unless and until there is available a force sufficiently strong enough to ensure successful resistance to Japan in the area threatened."⁵⁴ Britain still wanted to send a warning to Japan, but the reluctance of the United States and an improvement in the situation seemed to make it unnecessary.⁵⁵ She was, however, prepared to give Thailand as much assistance as the European and Far Eastern situation would allow.⁵⁶

New Zealand, until the attack on Pearl Harbor, was daily informed by Britain of the negotiations and increasing tension between the United States and Japan. Continually strong in her attitude toward Japan, the small Dominion found the final Japanese proposal to the United States completely unacceptable.⁵⁷ Knowing that this strong stand was

for Dominion Affairs and the Prime Ministers of Canada and South Africa.

⁵⁴Ibid., p. 56.

⁵⁵SSDA to Acting Prime Minister of New Zealand, Document 54, September 2, 1941, Ibid., pp. 61-62.

⁵⁶SSDA to Prime Minister of New Zealand, Document 64, November 17, 1941, Ibid., p. 70.

⁵⁷Prime Minister of New Zealand to SSDA, Document 70, November 24, 1941, Ibid., p. 78. Japan's final proposal to the United States stated that Japan would withdraw from Indo-China when peace was restored with China or when peace in the Pacific was arranged. The United States would unfreeze Japanese assets and also provide a specified quantity of oil to Japan. In addition, the United States would refrain from prejudicing efforts to restore peace between China and Japan. For details see Feis, Road to Pearl Harbor, p. 309 or SSDA to Prime Minister of New Zealand, Document 69, November 23, 1941, in Documents, III, 77.

not backed by any force, New Zealand pleaded with Britain for more help and hastened to improve her own meager defenses.

At the height of the Indo-China and Thailand crisis, Australia and New Zealand asked Britain about the defense of Singapore. Both countries felt that Singapore should be reinforced as soon as the European situation allowed.⁵⁸ Britain, aware that negotiations between the United States and Japan were crumbling, informed the Dominions that despite the demands of the European war, two new battleships, the HMS Prince of Wales and the HMS Repulse would be sent to Singapore.⁵⁹ Additional reinforcements came during the critical month of November. Troops were transported to Malaya, the Americans sent planes on the new Lend-Lease bill, and the British started gathering a Far Eastern fleet.⁶⁰

⁵⁸ Prime Minister of Australia to SSDA, Document 47, August 11, 1941, in Documents, III, 54-55 and Prime Minister of New Zealand to Prime Minister of Australia, Document 48, August 14, 1941, Ibid., pp. 55-56.

⁵⁹ Prime Minister of the United Kingdom to Prime Minister of New Zealand, Document 59, October 31, 1941, Ibid., p. 67. There were several reasons for the delay in sending ships. One reason was that in August Japan reinforced her Manchurian Army. This was interpreted to mean a Northern rather than a Southern movement by the Japanese. Another reason was that all available ships were needed to carry supplies for a New Middle East offensive. See J. M. A. Gwyer, Grand Strategy, Vol. III, pt. 1, June, 1941—August, 1942, in History of the Second World War, United Kingdom Series, edited by J. R. M. Butler (London: H. M. Stationary Office, 1964), 280-281. Hereafter cited as Gwyer, Grand Strategy, June, 1941—August, 1942. The ships arrived in Singapore December 2, 1941. See Churchill, Their Finest Hour, pp. 616-619.

⁶⁰ Feis, Road to Pearl Harbor, p. 301. The Far Eastern fleet, as proposed in the ABC-1 agreements called for two or three aircraft carriers, six battleships and an adequate escort of destroyers and cruisers.

While patiently waiting for Great Britain to reinforce Singapore, the New Zealand Government was not idle. General Sir Guy Williams, British military expert called to New Zealand to make recommendations for home defense,⁶¹ reported that the Home Guard ought to be reorganized, and suggested that the organization be closely tied to the Army.⁶² On August 1, formal announcement of a complete reorganization was made. Men were now compelled to attend all parades and were also divided into separate divisions. The first division, composed of "prime men," would act as a fighting force; the second division would be less physically fit and would act as a reserve.⁶³ To enhance the training of both the Home Guard and the Territorials, Brigadier General Edward Puttick, a member of the Expeditionary Force, was recalled to New Zealand to assume duties as Chief of General Staff.⁶⁴

The Territorial force also received another reorganization. With the exception of those conscripted in the past few months, this force received three months initial training and then only two weeks camp training, plus out-of-camp weekly parades, per year.⁶⁵ General Williams recommended that all troops receive two months, instead of two weeks, annual

⁶¹The Evening Post (Wellington), June 24, 1941, p. 8.

⁶²Ibid., July 21, 1941, p. 8.

⁶³Ibid., August 1, 1941, p. 6.

⁶⁴Ibid., p. 8.

⁶⁵Wood, Political and External Affairs, p. 213.

training.⁶⁶ To carry out this program, about one-sixth of the officers and other ranks were mobilized to provide a cadre of specially-trained men to handle the yearly training of the Territorials, or the training of new recruits, should mobilization be ordered.⁶⁷

Weapons to supply this reorganized home defense force were still almost impossible to find. In a telegram to the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs, the Prime Minister stated that efforts were being made to bring defenses up to the standards of the Expeditionary Force. Such standards were hard to reach, however, because ". . . unlike other Dominions, New Zealand is unable to manufacture essential arms for its own use and is therefore entirely dependent on overseas sources . . ."⁶⁸ Fraser added that they needed equipment and asked for weapons of all kinds including rifles, bayonets, tanks, anti-tank guns, anti-aircraft guns, machine guns, and all the ammunition for firing the above weapons.⁶⁹

⁶⁶Ibid.

⁶⁷The Evening Post (Wellington), September 19, 1941, p. 4. A cadre consisted of about 5,700 Territorials. It is interesting to note that in the height of the summer Far Eastern crisis, 23,825 men were drafted for the Expeditionary Force and many of these were taken from the ranks of the Territorials. See Ibid., August 5, 1941, p. 8.

⁶⁸Prime Minister of New Zealand to SSDA, Document 193, September 4, 1941, in Documents, III, 217.

⁶⁹Ibid.

Britain, busily producing these essential items for her own needs, could only send a few tanks.⁷⁰

The New Zealand Navy was in a like state of unpreparedness. As of July 30, the fleet consisted of two 7,000-ton cruisers, the HMS Achilles and HMS Leander, one armed merchant vessel, one government vessel, nine mine sweepers or auxiliary sweepers and a host of small patrol craft. Naval personnel consisted of 349 officers and 3,834 ranks, serving at home and overseas.⁷¹ General Williams, in a report on October 1, did not recommend an increase in this force, but advised that some of New Zealand's small harbors be mined and closed and all approach areas to the main harbors be mined.⁷² An estimate of the cost of such preliminary precautions was not presented to the Defense Minister until November 27, and was not formally adopted until December 15, 1941.⁷³

The Air Force, as of July 30, consisted of 30,000 men,⁷⁴ though many of these were connected with the British

⁷⁰The Evening Post (Wellington), October 20, 1941, p. 5.

⁷¹Ibid., July 30, 1941, p. 9. The Navy had not been greatly enlarged since September, 1939. See Waters, The Navy, p. 14.

⁷²Waters, The Navy, p. 223.

⁷³Ibid., pp. 224 and 225. The estimated cost was £1,000,000.

⁷⁴The Evening Post (Wellington), July 30, 1941, p. 6.

air arm. Due to the shortage of equipment, little improvement had been made since early 1941.⁷⁵ New Zealanders now boasted of an aircraft factory, but this industry employed a mere 225 men and did not make engines or instruments.⁷⁶ These necessary items had to be imported and were almost impossible to get.

The Fiji Islands, supposedly New Zealand's first line of defense were, as of November, defended by 4,943 men. Weapons included six 18-pound artillery guns, twelve dilapidated aircraft, one old ship, and five patrol launches.⁷⁷

When Japan ordered the mobilization of their Southern Army on November 6,⁷⁸ "there was not one anti-aircraft gun in the South West Pacific . . . and the strength of defenses would not have deterred the most irresolute enemy."⁷⁹

⁷⁵Ross, Air Force, p. 77. During the late months of 1941, New Zealand did receive some Hudson bombers from United Kingdom allocations in the United States. Modern aircraft, however, was still very scarce in New Zealand.

⁷⁶The Evening Post (Wellington), August 21, 1941, p. 10.

⁷⁷Gillespie, The Pacific, p. 42.

⁷⁸Ibid., p. 12.

⁷⁹Ibid., p. 42.

CHAPTER IV

THE THREAT OF INVASION

On December 7, 1941, Japan attacked Pearl Harbor. The Government of New Zealand had received warnings of Japanese movements the previous day,¹ but, as in the United States, the attack came as a surprise. The Government quickly reacted by declaring war on Japan² and then turned to the New Zealand Chiefs of Staff for estimates of the country's defense needs to withstand the probable invasion. On December 8, the military generals issued a report stating that six months would elapse before an invasion force would threaten the country, and only then if the United States suffered another major defeat and the "fortress" at Singapore fell.³

¹SSDA to Prime Minister of New Zealand, Documents 90-98, December 7, 1941, in Documents, III, 97-104. New Zealand received a detailed account of the proceedings between Japan and the United States from the last days of November until the attack.

²The Evening Post (Wellington), December 9, 1941, p. 8. New Zealand declared war on Japan at 11 A. M., December 8, 1941.

³Wood, Political and External Affairs, p. 214. The Chiefs also recommended that, if adequate naval protection could be found, the reinforcements for the Expeditionary Force should be sent. They stated New Zealand need only to mobilize the 4,600 fortress troops.

Within a few days, two huge new battleships, the HMS Prince of Wales and the HMS Repulse, sent by Prime Minister Churchill to protect Singapore, had been sunk.⁴ This tragedy prompted Prime Minister Fraser, on December 11, to speak to the New Zealand House of Representatives concerning the country's position. He declared that the loss of the two battleships as well as the recent Japanese attacks on Malaya, Hong Kong, and other United States and United Kingdom possessions had placed New Zealand in extreme danger.⁵ The Prime Minister added that the War Cabinet was closely watching the situation and said that the necessary steps were being taken to defend the country. Fraser revealed that the entire Air Force, plus units of the Home Guard and Territorials, had already been called to duty. In addition, entry of new recruits into service had been moved up from January to December 15, and all leave had been canceled for members of the Armed Services—exceptions being made for those replacements destined for immediate service in the Expeditionary Force.⁶ In matters of civil defense of the population, the

⁴The Evening Post (Wellington), December 11, 1941, p. 9. These two battle ships, arriving at Singapore on December 6, were supposed to have been accompanied by an aircraft carrier, but an unfortunate accident sent the carrier to port for repairs. Without air protection, the Japanese quickly sank both ships. For details of the sinking see J. M. A. Gwyer, Grand Strategy, June, 1941—August, 1942, pp. 308-310.

⁵New Zealand, Parliamentary Debates, CCLXI (1942), 24.

⁶Ibid.

Emergency Precautions group had been placed on constant alert. To impress upon the people the gravity of the situation, Fraser exclaimed, "It is the plain duty of every man and woman to join up with the appropriate organization and to prepare themselves to do their part when the country may be fighting for its very existence and when the lives of every man, woman, and child may be in danger."⁷

The Prime Minister's estimate of his country's dangerous position was not exaggerated. Preoccupation with the war in Europe and the difficulty of obtaining material had left the New Zealand defense force tragically inadequate. Her Air Force consisted of thirty-six bombers and twenty-nine other first-line aircraft. She had some 251 other craft, but these were either obsolete or were trainers and could be used only in case of extreme emergency.⁸ The Navy had not been measurably expanded since July, 1941.⁹ The Army had 13,250 men in camp (including reinforcements for the 2nd division and the Fiji Islands), 4,600 fortress troops, and other small training cadres, all exclusive of the Home Guard.

⁷Ibid., p. 25.

⁸Gillespie, The Pacific, pp. 43-44. The Air Force contained 10,500 personnel, but 2,512 had been sent to Canada to train for action over Europe. A plan called the FAFAI Scheme, was also organized, whereby, in emergency, every available plane and every available pilot would be employed as bombers—regardless if the plane was a fighter, trainer, or civilian craft. For details see Ross, Air Force, p. 111.

⁹See Chapter III, p. 61.

On December 15, 11,000 Territorial recruits entered camp; by the end of December, 28,850 men were in camp, and the Army was preparing facilities for a total of 39,350 troops by January 10.¹⁰ The poorly-trained and meagerly-equipped Home Guard was issued fifty none-too-new machine guns but was not given further training.¹¹

The Fiji Islands, New Zealand's first line of defense and an important air reinforcing chain for the United States, was heavily reinforced with all existing anti-aircraft and Bofor guns, as well as eighteen field guns, two 6-inch howitzers and two 60-pound field guns. Manpower was also increased by over 4,000 men.¹²

Throughout the remainder of December, the Government continued to place the country on an emergency war footing. All men between ages twenty-one and fifty-five, with as many as three dependent children, were asked to enroll in some defense organization.¹³ People living in cities were ordered

¹⁰ Gillespie, The Pacific, pp. 43-44. The Territorials, numbering 31,000, were not mobilized at this time. See also Wood, Political and External Affairs, pp. 212-213.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Chief of General Staff (Wellington) to General Freyberg, Document 53, January 2, 1942, in Documents, II, 36. Prime Minister of New Zealand to Rt. Hon. Winston Churchill (Washington), Document 257, Ibid., III, 294-295. Fraser did not tell Churchill that the only four anti-aircraft and the only four Bofor guns possessed by New Zealand were sent to the Fiji Islands and were taken from coastal emplacements. These guns were replaced with dummies until more guns arrived from Britain. See Gillespie, The Pacific, p. 46.

¹³ The Evening Post (Wellington), December 19, 1941, p. 6.

to make provision for entire blackouts in home and factory¹⁴ and, although the cities were not fully darkened, many full blackout practices occurred during December.¹⁵ Men were also asked to help dig trenches around the cities to act as bomb shelters or defense positions but, despite several pleas, few people responded.¹⁶

The situation for New Zealand looked falsely optimistic by the end of December. American troops and equipment were arriving in Australia¹⁷ and, after urgent appeals to the United Kingdom and the United States, military supplies consisting mainly of small arms and ammunition, but including some big guns, began arriving in New Zealand.¹⁸ The antiquated Air Force also received word that it would get planes and did, in fact, receive thirty Hudson bombers by the end of December.¹⁹ These events prompted Lieutenant General Sir Edward Puttick, Commander of the forces in New Zealand, to announce that things were looking good in the Pacific but, he added, ". . . the crisis is not over."²⁰

¹⁴Ibid. ¹⁵Ibid., December 15, 1941, p. 6.

¹⁶Ibid., December 18, 1941, p. 8.

¹⁷Matloff and Snell, Strategic Planning, pp. 83, 85. On December 12, 1941, a convoy of American troops and planes were diverted from Manila to Australia. On December 15, two more ships were ordered to load with munitions and planes for Australia.

¹⁸Gillespie, The Pacific, p. 44.

¹⁹Ross, Air Force, p. 77.

²⁰The Evening Post (Wellington), December 21, 1941, p.

Indeed, the real crisis had only begun. By the end of December the New Zealand Chiefs of Staff issued another report—more serious and threatening than the last. The revised estimate of probable invasion stated that if the American fleet suffered another serious defeat, an attack could come within three months. To defend the country at least six divisions would be needed, and currently, only three divisions had been formed. They recommended that the reinforcements scheduled to go to the Middle East in January should remain and that no reinforcements be sent to the European theater until December, 1942.²¹

The Prime Minister immediately cabled General Bernard Freyberg, Commander of the Second New Zealand Expeditionary Force, that the situation with Japan and the possible threat to the Fiji Islands necessitated diverting some, or all, reinforcements away from the Near East. Fraser added that the Government had no intentions of forgetting New Zealand's commitments to that theater, but circumstances in the South Pacific made retention of these troops necessary.²² On December 30, the Prime Minister announced that a complete

²¹Gordon, New Zealand Becomes a Pacific Power, p. 175.

²²Prime Minister to General Freyberg, Document 52, December 26, 1941, in Documents, II, 36. In a reply, Freyberg revealed that his command had enough reinforcements to last six months or, with luck, until August, 1942, after which he hoped that more men would arrive. See General Freyberg to Prime Minister, Document 54, January 5, 1942, Ibid., pp. 38-39.

mobilization of the Territorials and Expeditionary Force reinforcements would take place January 10.²³

Several days after Fraser's announcement the United States informed the New Zealand Government that an attack on the Fiji Islands could take place at any time. The scale of attack was estimated to be one division with four aircraft carriers as an escort.²⁴ Since mobilization was only a few days removed, New Zealand decided to wait. On January 10 the Dominion mobilized:

. . . twenty-three battalions and eighteen being formed, nine mounted rifle regiments, and miscellaneous and ancillary troops. Medium guns and howitzers . . . [were] . . . utilised to cover various anchorages, leaving only one troop of 6-inch howitzers for the field forces. Field artillery . . . [included] thirty-six 25-pounders and fifty 18-pounders. The total strength . . . [was] approximately 50,000 by 10 January, rising to 62,000 about one month later, and 68,000 ultimately, all exclusive of the Home Guard.²⁵

On the day of mobilization, New Zealand Chiefs of Staff issued yet another report on defense in relation to

²³The Evening Post (Wellington), December 30, 1941, p. 6.

²⁴Gillespie, The Pacific, p. 26. This was not an idle warning. According to Churchill, Japan planned to take the Fiji Islands and other islands to obtain jumping off points in invasions of New Zealand, Australia and Hawaii. See Winston S. Churchill, The Second World War, Vol. IV: The Hinge of Fate (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1950), p. 239. Hereafter cited as Churchill, Hinge of Fate.

²⁵The Chief of General Staff (Wellington) to General Freyberg GOC 2nd New Zealand Expeditionary Force (Egypt), Document 194, January 2, 1942, in Documents, III, 217-218.

the resources of its Far Eastern neighbors. This analysis stated that Japan needed resources such as rice, tin, rubber, oil, etc., and these items were not found in New Zealand. Thus it would neither be necessary to attack New Zealand nor, in the estimation of the Generals, would the country be attacked until either Allied naval power was destroyed or Allied power to reinforce the Far East failed.²⁶ In their opinion, Japan had four possible objectives. The first was to secure China by cutting off supplies; the second was to eliminate the Allied naval force by neutralizing Singapore and Manila; the third was acquiring resources in the South Sea; and the fourth was keeping the Allies from interrupting pursuit of the other three objectives.²⁷ The last objective presented the danger to New Zealand. Japan would, according to the Chiefs of Staff, seize strategic islands to secure and consolidate her possessions. The Fiji Islands would be among those attacked, therefore, New Zealand should do everything possible to fortify them. In conclusion, the Generals felt that New Zealand and surrounding islands would have to fear only small raiding parties until Japan had secured her gains and could launch a major invasion force.²⁸

Although this report was more encouraging than those in the past, frenzied preparations for air attack or invasion

²⁶Gordon, New Zealand Becomes a Pacific Power, p. 148.

²⁷Ibid., p. 149.

²⁸Ibid., pp. 150-151.

continued. Authorization was given to local governments and to the Emergency Precautions Scheme to confiscate buildings and lands for use as air raid shelters.²⁹ The general public was also warned to have buckets of water ready at all times for fires caused by incendiary bombs.³⁰ Due to gaps in the EPS ranks caused by recent ballots for the service, the organization was made compulsory for all men between the ages of eighteen and sixty-six who did not or could not belong to the Armed Services.³¹

Workers in New Zealand were also required to register with the Government. The reasons given for this were ". . . to direct them into work of national importance, to stop workers from leaving industries which were regarded as essential, and to restrict the engagement of labourers into industries not regarded as essential."³²

Men for the Army continued to be balloted at a rapid pace throughout January. All eligible single men had been drafted by late December, 1941, thus forcing the Government, on January 20, to ballot 27,104³³ married men between the ages of eighteen and forty-five who were without children.³⁴

²⁹The Evening Post (Wellington), January 6, 1942, p. 8; January 8, 1942, p. 6.

³⁰Ibid., January 21, 1942, p. 6.

³¹Ibid., January 22, 1942, p. 8.

³²Baker, The New Zealand People at War, p. 97.

³³The Evening Post (Wellington), January 21, 1942, p. 4.

³⁴Ibid., January 6, 1942, p. 6. Also see Nash, A Working Democracy, p. 115.

The Home Guard was taken out of civilian control and placed under the Army, but was not mobilized.³⁵

The Air Force, though suffering from an acute shortage of planes, was, nevertheless, in a continuous state of expansion. In addition to several new airfields constructed before the war, many more were now being planned and equipped for operation by large, heavy-duty craft.³⁶ Radar stations were also being established in New Zealand, but there was much work left to be done in this area.³⁷

It had, by this time, become uncomfortably obvious that battles in this war could be won or lost by air support. New Zealand, acutely aware of her nakedness in this area, pleaded with the United Kingdom throughout January and the first weeks in February for planes. Fighter planes were critically needed for the protection of any bomber force that would strike at an invasion convoy.³⁸ Short-range interceptor craft were needed to protect Auckland and Wellington, New Zealand's two main ports.³⁹ Prime Minister

³⁵Nash, A Working Democracy, p. 116.

³⁶Ibid., pp. 114-115.

³⁷Ross, Air Force, p. 115. Lack of fighter planes made ground radar unnecessary. Most of what little equipment New Zealand had went into air radar to detect invaders. When the Allies came, a different radar network had to be installed.

³⁸Prime Minister of New Zealand to SSDA, Document 195, January 30, 1942, in Documents, III, 218.

³⁹Ibid.

Fraser, in a telegram to Churchill, asked for only two squadrons of long-range fighters and two squadrons of interceptor fighters, the minimum amount needed for the protection of the country.⁴⁰ Prime Minister Churchill replied that a telegram containing the proposed allocations of defense equipment was already on its way to New Zealand.⁴¹ Before Churchill's telegram was received, the outline of defense equipment allocations arrived. It stated that thirty-six trainer fighter planes, which had been on order since the end of December,⁴² might be sent, as well as eighteen additional fighters.⁴³ Fraser immediately reminded Churchill that most of these aircraft had been on order for some time and, although he was grateful, the planes would still not be enough to adequately defend the small Dominion.⁴⁴ After some delay, Churchill wearily replied that he would ask the United States to allocate two squadrons of fighters

⁴⁰Ibid. Fraser specifically asked for eighteen fighters to act as bomber escorts and twenty-seven fighters to act as interception aircraft.

⁴¹SSDA to Prime Minister of New Zealand, Document 196, February 3, 1942, Ibid., p. 219. In a telegram not published, Britain outlined material, primarily rifles, tank artillery and planes she would agree to send New Zealand by March 31, 1942. See Ibid., 219n.

⁴²Ibid., p. 220n. An unpublished telegram, dated December 27, 1941, requested planes for New Zealand defense.

⁴³Prime Minister of New Zealand to SSDA, Document 197, February 4, 1942, Ibid., p. 220. New Zealand was quite upset over these additional eighteen planes because at the same time 124 planes were going to Australia.

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 221.

to New Zealand and, if the Americans could not comply, he would divert two United States squadrons destined for North Ireland to New Zealand.⁴⁵ The prospect of increased fighter protection coupled with the arrival of an American squadron in the Fiji Islands,⁴⁶ made the plane situation, by the middle of February, look somewhat brighter for the frightened little country.

New Zealand's immediate defense interests were closely tied to the broader Allied strategical plans for the prosecution of the Pacific war. The Dominion was vitally interested in these plans and meant to have a voice in determining Far Eastern war strategy. Within a month after the attack on Pearl Harbor, a unified command of the countries affected by the Pacific war was created. Known as the ABDA Command and named after the four principle powers in the area, the Command encompassed the countries of Australia, the Netherlands East Indies, Burma, the Philippines, the South China Sea, the northeast part of the Indian Ocean, and all British and American possessions in this area.⁴⁷ Sir Archibald Wavall was placed in command of the entire area and had subordinate

⁴⁵SSDA to Prime Minister of New Zealand, Document 198, February 14, 1942, Ibid., p. 222. On April 9, New Zealand was informed that these squadrons would not come.

⁴⁶Ross, Air Force, p. 174. An American fighter squadron arrived in the Fiji Islands by the end of January. They were followed, a few days later, by several flying fortresses. Also see Matloff and Snell, Strategic Planning, p. 171.

⁴⁷Morison, The Rising Sun, p. 277.

officers from each of the countries concerned.⁴⁸ New Zealand was not to be connected with this area but was to be part of another section called Australasia, which encompassed American shipping lines to the Pacific and was to be protected by the Americans.⁴⁹

Fraser, in a rather bitter telegram to Churchill, emphatically declared he did not agree with this arrangement.⁵⁰ The ABDA area was much too small, New Zealand was definitely tied to this area and wanted a full voice in the proceedings of the Command.⁵¹ The Prime Minister, referring to New Zealand's isolation caused by the ABDA Command, declared that the country had always abided by past decisions made by the British Government because each decision could mean the life of the United Kingdom, but now, with the war at New Zealand's doorstep, it was vitally necessary for the Dominion to have a part in the decisions made by the higher authorities—whether in London or Washington.⁵²

Japanese gains in the South Pacific and the incessant demands of New Zealand resulted in the organization of a

⁴⁸SSDA to Prime Minister of New Zealand, Document 112, December 29, 1941, in Documents, III, 113-114.

⁴⁹Ibid., p. 114.

⁵⁰Prime Minister of New Zealand to SSDA, Document 117, January 17, 1942, Ibid., p. 124.

⁵¹Ibid., p. 125.

⁵²Ibid., p. 128.

naval command known as Anzac.⁵³ This area encompassed part of Australia, British New Guinea, the Solomons, the Fiji Islands, and New Zealand with Vice Admiral H. F. Leary, USN, as Commander in Chief.⁵⁴ Soon after the formation of this new area was announced, Fraser received another telegram stating that plans were being formulated for a council composed of Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and the Netherlands. This war council would be closely connected with the United States and would have a voice in the direction of the Pacific War.⁵⁵ New Zealand replied that the United States should definitely have a seat on this policy-making body⁵⁶ and that a council in London with communications in Washington would be much too clumsy,⁵⁷ therefore, the

⁵³Prime Minister of the United Kingdom to Prime Minister of New Zealand, Document 119, January 14, 1942, Ibid., p. 124.

⁵⁴Morison, The Rising Sun, pp. 277-278.

⁵⁵SSDA to Prime Minister of New Zealand, Document 121, January 17, 1942, in Documents, III, 133. See also Document 123, January 19, 1942, Ibid., pp. 134-135; Churchill, Hinge of Fate, p. 18.

⁵⁶Prime Minister of New Zealand to SSDA, Document 124, January 20, 1942, in Documents, III, 125.

⁵⁷Prime Minister of New Zealand to SSDA, Document 129, January 26, 1942, Ibid., p. 142. The combined British-American Chiefs of Staff were located at Washington. Messages would have to be transmitted between New Zealand, the Council in London, the Joint Chiefs of Staff in Washington, back to the Council and then back to the President of the United States for confirmation.

organization should probably be in Washington.⁵⁸ This realistic proposal was forwarded through London to Washington whereupon Roosevelt, agreeing with Churchill, stated that the council should be held in London.⁵⁹ Such formidable opposition quieted all dissenting opinion, thus making it possible for the council to meet February 10.⁶⁰ New Zealand received her voice in the conduct of the Pacific war but, somewhat disgruntled with the situation, continued to fight for the organization of a Washington war council.⁶¹

Areas of command for the prosecution of the war had no sooner been organized when events forced complete alteration. In December the Japanese landed on Malaya and steady fighting had finally forced the defenders, by February 2, to withdraw to Singapore island.⁶² By February 12, most of the "impregnable fortress" had to be blown up to prevent it

⁵⁸Ibid., p. 143. Also see The Evening Post (Wellington), January 28, 1942, p. 6.

⁵⁹SSDA to Prime Minister of New Zealand, Document 133, February 2, 1942, Ibid., pp. 145-146.

⁶⁰Churchill, Hinge of Fate, p. 19. Also see Nicholas Mansergh, Survey of British Commonwealth Affairs; Problems of War Time Cooperation and Post War Change, 1939-52 (London and others: Oxford University Press, 1958), p. 137. Hereafter cited as Mansergh, Survey of Commonwealth Affairs.

⁶¹See Documents 139, 141, 143, and 145 in Documents, III, 151-152, 154, 155, 156.

⁶²The Evening Post (Wellington), February 2, 1942, p. 5.

from falling into Japanese hands.⁶³ Four days later Churchill announced that Singapore had fallen.⁶⁴ Fraser, in an announcement the same day, stated, "It would be idle and wrong to pretend that the fall of Singapore has not brought danger nearer to our shores. But while there is ample cause for well-grounded concern, there is no room for foolish or frantic panic."⁶⁵

The danger to New Zealand was certainly great enough to cause panic. The Fiji Islands were now the only fortified islands that lay between New Zealand and the Japanese Navy, and they had received possible attack warnings.⁶⁶ On February 17, Fraser cabled Churchill an outline of possible Japanese objectives.⁶⁷ They were: (1) attack Burma, (2) go through Burma to attack India, (3) attack Australia, and (4) attack New Zealand.⁶⁸ It did not seem plausible that Japan would venture an attack on India, but she might try

⁶³Ibid., February 12, 1942, p. 7.

⁶⁴Ibid., February 16, 1942, p. 5. For events of the fall of Singapore see Churchill, Hinge of Fate, pp. 92-107.

⁶⁵The Evening Post (Wellington), February 16, 1942, p. 6.

⁶⁶Ross, Air Force, pp. 125-126. On February 13, Coastwatchers had sighted a task force headed for the Fiji Islands. Pilots were briefed for a possible attack, but the Japanese apparently turned in another direction since they were not seen the next day.

⁶⁷Prime Minister of New Zealand to SSDA, Document 199, February 17, 1942, in Documents, III, 223-227.

⁶⁸Ibid., p. 225.

to consolidate her gains by driving the Allies out of the Pacific.⁶⁹ To prevent this from occurring, the Prime Minister felt that both New Zealand and the Fiji Islands should be heavily fortified.⁷⁰ Fraser estimated that minimum air strength needed to protect his country, besides those planes already possessed by New Zealand, would be two long-range and two short-range fighter squadrons, one dive bomber squadron, four troop carrying planes, and two torpedo bomber or medium bomber squadrons.⁷¹ He also recommended that a host of other equipment be sent, enough to turn the little country into a fortress.⁷²

New Zealand Chiefs of Staff, unlike Fraser, found it increasingly difficult to give further estimates of an attack because of so many varying factors.⁷³ Japanese strength could only be estimated and the Japanese in turn would have to evaluate New Zealand strength, its importance as an Allied base, and the country's importance as a possible Japanese base in an attack on Australia.⁷⁴ Only one factor remained

⁶⁹Ibid.

⁷⁰Ibid., p. 226.

⁷¹Prime Minister of New Zealand to SSDA, Document 200, February 19, 1942, Ibid., p. 231.

⁷²Ibid., p. 229n.

⁷³Chief of General Staff (Wellington) to the New Zealand Liaison Officer (London), Document 203, February 27, 1942, Ibid., p. 231. Also see Gordon, New Zealand Becomes a Pacific Power, p. 155.

⁷⁴Document 203, in Documents, III, 231.

constant in the estimate of the Generals. If Allied naval fleets were to receive a major defeat, invasion would seem quite likely and might succeed because of partially-trained men and inferior weapons.⁷⁵

The lack of weapons and the difficulty in procuring them spurred New Zealand to greater efforts in home defense preparation. The program of building air raid shelters was accelerated,⁷⁶ plans were made for population dispersal in cities in case of attack,⁷⁷ emergency medical facilities were organized⁷⁸ and, above all, more men were called for the service.⁷⁹

Though the situation looked dark to many New Zealanders, evidence of promised American and British aid was starting to appear. A small American naval force, on February 12, arrived in New Zealand.⁸⁰ This was followed several days later by a letter from Roosevelt stating that Americans would soon strongly reinforce both Pacific Dominions.⁸¹ As Fraser was reading this heartening note, 19,000 American soldiers

⁷⁵Ibid., p. 232.

⁷⁶The Evening Post (Wellington), February 14, 1942, p. 8.

⁷⁷Ibid., February 11, 1942, p. 4.

⁷⁸Ibid., February 9, 1942, p. 4.

⁷⁹Ibid., February 6, 1942, p. 6. All young men were called regardless of the number of children they had.

⁸⁰Ibid., February 12, 1942, p. 8.

⁸¹Matloff and Snell, Strategic Planning, p. 165.

were slowly crossing the Pacific to Australia.⁸² There would, however, be several more dark clouds before relief would come.

The continued southern progress of the Japanese,⁸³ and particularly the loss of Singapore, destroyed the ABDA area. By the end of February it was decided that the organization's headquarters be dissolved and command be transferred to the Dutch, who were still fighting in some areas.⁸⁴ The attack on Darwin, Australia, in February⁸⁵ and the invasion of New Guinea⁸⁶ made the threat of invasion, for the Pacific Dominions, seem dangerously close. To substitute for the rather protective shield of the ABDA Command, Australia, with full agreement from New Zealand, proposed an extension of the Anzac area to cover both countries and the surrounding islands.⁸⁷ An Anzac Council in Washington composed of the United States, United Kingdom, New Zealand, and

⁸²Ibid., p. 129.

⁸³Gillespie, The Pacific, p. 18. By January 23, the Japanese occupied Timor, the Celebes and a part of New Guinea.

⁸⁴SSDA to Prime Minister of New Zealand, Document 148, February 25, 1942, in Documents, III, 157.

⁸⁵The Evening Post (Wellington), February 20, 1942, p. 5.

⁸⁶Ibid., March 9, 1942, p. 5.

⁸⁷Prime Minister of Australia to SSDA, Document 151, March 4, 1942, in Documents, III, 161.

Australia, with President Roosevelt as Chairman, would direct the new command.⁸⁸

This proposal was sent to the United Kingdom and the United States, but, in the meantime, the Americans had offered a counter-proposal. This plan stated that the United Kingdom would protect and control the area west of Singapore, including the Indian and Mediterranean Oceans; the United States would assume responsibility for the area east of Singapore, including Australia and New Zealand. The President also suggested a Washington Pacific War Council be organized to deal with defense questions, leaving the London Council to cope with the political disputes.⁸⁹

Several weeks after this new proposal was offered, New Zealand, much to her dismay, learned that under the new arrangement she would again be separated from Australia. The area defended by the United States would be subdivided into several commands. The small Dominion would be operational headquarters for an area covering the South Pacific and including all small islands surrounding New Zealand.⁹⁰ Australia would be operational headquarters for an area including that country and all immediate approaches to it

⁸⁸Ibid., p. 162.

⁸⁹High Commissioner for New Zealand (London) to the Prime Minister, Document 151, March 4, 1942, Ibid., p. 161.

⁹⁰New Zealand Minister (Washington) to the Prime Minister, Document 167, March 24, 1942, Ibid., p. 186.

and would be designated as the South-West Pacific.⁹¹ New Zealand, definitely opposed to any separation of the two Dominions and viewing such proposals as "impractical and dangerous,"⁹² could do little to change existing plans. She therefore, on April 5, gave her reluctant consent to the creation of the new Pacific commands.⁹³

The disheartening news of separation from Australia was lessened by the creation of a Washington Council. Meeting on April 1, 1942, the Council consisted of members from the United Kingdom, China, Australia, the Netherlands, Canada, New Zealand, and the United States.⁹⁴ This was a major accomplishment for the Pacific Dominions since they would now, at least, be informed of decisions being made which affected their areas.

The creation of a new South Pacific Command, with New Zealand as its base, foretold the help that would soon come. Churchill had already asked President Roosevelt to send

⁹¹New Zealand Minister (Washington) to the Prime Minister, Document 178, April 3, 1942, Ibid., p. 199. Also see Matloff and Snell, Strategic Planning, pp. 168-169.

⁹²Prime Minister of New Zealand to the Prime Minister of Australia, Document 171, March 26, 1942, in Documents, III, 190.

⁹³Prime Minister of New Zealand to the New Zealand Minister, Washington, Document 179, April 5, 1942, Ibid., p. 201.

⁹⁴Matloff and Snell, Strategic Planning, p. 217n; Nash, A Working Democracy, p. 123. The Council was not the policy-making body that New Zealand and Australia had hoped, but rather served to keep the Dominions informed of the events and plans for the Pacific War. See Mansergh, Survey of Commonwealth Affairs, pp. 138-139.

troops to New Zealand⁹⁵ and, Roosevelt replied that the United States would send a division to New Zealand and a division to Australia. This, added to the two divisions en route to the Pacific would make a total of 90,000 American troops in the area.⁹⁶ The division that was to come to New Zealand would not, however, sail until May 15.⁹⁷

American troops, while appreciated, were, to the New Zealand point of view, too few and too slow in coming.⁹⁸ Estimates placed Japanese available strength at twenty-nine divisions, while New Zealand home strength was three divisions.⁹⁹ The three divisions, coupled with the American division, left the defense force two short of the estimated six divisions needed to defend the country,¹⁰⁰ and pitifully small in comparison to estimates of Japanese strength.

On March 27, a long-awaited report from the British Chiefs of Staff on New Zealand defenses was received. This

⁹⁵ Churchill, Hinge of Fate, p. 193. Churchill wanted an American division to go as an alternative to New Zealand withdrawing her division from the Middle East.

⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 195.

⁹⁷ SSDA to Prime Minister of New Zealand, Document 208, March 10, 1942, in Documents, III, 235.

⁹⁸ Prime Minister of New Zealand to SSDA, Document 210, March 15, 1942, Ibid., p. 243. It appears that New Zealand fears might have been justified. In February and March, Japanese submarines launched reconnaissance planes and made several flights over the Wellington and Auckland areas, as well as the Fiji Islands. See Gillespie, The Pacific, p. 50 or Waters, The Navy, p. 214.

⁹⁹ Document 210, Documents, III, 245.

¹⁰⁰ See above p. 68.

report stated that an attack was highly unlikely¹⁰¹ but if it did come, the Japanese would have an estimated eleven divisions and five aircraft carriers.¹⁰² To combat this force the Generals suggested the Allied naval and ground forces in the area be bolstered and that New Zealand be supplied with guns for her poorly-armed army, anti-aircraft and anti-tank weapons, but most of all—airplanes.¹⁰³

Almost immediately after the report was received, the British Air Ministry told the Dominion that no planes were available at the present time.¹⁰⁴ This information was followed the same day by a telegram from Churchill stating that United States planes could not be diverted from Australia for use in New Zealand.¹⁰⁵ He did add, however, that some craft would be diverted from the Middle East consignment and would soon arrive in New Zealand.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰¹New Zealand Liaison Officer (London) to Chief of General Staff (Wellington), Document 219, March 27, 1942, in Documents, III, 253. The report stated that a Japanese invasion would entail long lines of communication—easily cut. If islands surrounding New Zealand could be held an invasion did not seem likely. If these islands were taken, New Zealand would be isolated. This would serve Japanese purposes, thus making invasion unnecessary.

¹⁰²Ibid.

¹⁰³Ibid., p. 254.

¹⁰⁴SSDA to Prime Minister of New Zealand, Document 221, March 31, 1942, Ibid., pp. 257-258.

¹⁰⁵SSDA to Prime Minister of New Zealand, Document 222, March 31, 1942, Ibid., p. 259.

¹⁰⁶Ibid.

The frustration felt by the Labour Government must have been immense. The small, frightened country, with no bargaining power at her disposal, could only wait for relief or invasion—whichever came first. One of the major steps taken in preparing for invasion was the further broadening of conscription powers. Besides calling up an additional 17,500 men for the Territorial forces,¹⁰⁷ the Home Guard was made compulsory for all men not in some branch of service.¹⁰⁸ The drafting of men and women for industry was also enlarged to the extent that on March 14, all men between ages forty-six and fifty and all women twenty and twenty-one, were ordered to register for service.¹⁰⁹ It was estimated that approximately 20,000 men and a slightly larger number of girls would register.¹¹⁰ These people would be diverted to defense work of some type in order that war production would become more efficient.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁷The Evening Post (Wellington), March 25, 1942, p. 6. Married men between the ages eighteen and forty-six, without children, and men eighteen to twenty-eight, with children, were conscripted. When these men were trained, mobilized forces would be 155,132, excluding the 100,000 Home Guardsmen. See Prime Minister to New Zealand Minister, Washington, Document 209, March 13, 1942, in Documents, III, 241.

¹⁰⁸New Zealand, Parliamentary Debates, CCLXI (1942), 86.

¹⁰⁹The Evening Post (Wellington), March 14, 1942, p. 8.

¹¹⁰Ibid., March 17, 1942, p. 6; March 22, 1942, p. 6.

¹¹¹Ibid., March 14, 1942, p. 8. Sports such as horse racing or football were confined to the time of day or week when it would least affect the work of the people. See Ibid., March 13, 1942, p. 6.

Preparation for Allied relief centered around war defense construction. A Defense Construction Council was organized to make sure that all defense works received building priority.¹¹² Works receiving the highest priority were air bases. New Zealand was told that she would have to prepare bases for 200 heavy bombers and 400 naval aircraft which were coming in the near future.¹¹³ Throughout the early months of 1942, despite the lack of heavy machinery, New Zealand constructed new bases and enlarged others.¹¹⁴

The imminent possibility of an invasion and the apparent inability of the home forces to cope with it led to a political crisis in the middle of March. The Labour Government was charged with being too lenient on the people, not mobilizing the entire country for war, and not training or arming the troops adequately.¹¹⁵ Much of the criticism centered around the Home Guard. The opposition charged that, while large numbers of men were recruited, there was such a lack of equipment that the force was of little use. No one, according to the opposition, really believed that this force would do much more than ". . . take up slack in a moment of

¹¹²Ibid., March 12, 1942, p. 8.

¹¹³Prime Minister to New Zealand Minister, Washington, Document 209, March 13, 1942, in Documents, III, 239.

¹¹⁴Ross, Air Force, p. 112.

¹¹⁵For the full debate see New Zealand, Parliamentary Debates, CCLXI (1942), 88-181.

emergency."¹¹⁶ Other areas, such as giving the people too much propaganda,¹¹⁷ allowing the people to work a normal forty-hour week,¹¹⁸ and excessive domestic spending¹¹⁹ were also criticized by the National Party. There was little that the Labour Government could do to defend its program but outline the progress made and give assurances that the country could defend itself.¹²⁰

It was quite obvious, however, that the country could not defend itself. Thus, when the Prime Minister was informed in early April that 6,000 Americans would be dispatched to New Zealand in early May,¹²¹ he replied that he welcomed the decision and was most anxious that everything be done to accelerate assistance by the United States.¹²² Resources and manpower stretched almost to the limit, New Zealand anxiously awaited the Americans. On May 21, 1942, Vice Admiral Robert L. Ghormley, first Commander of the South Pacific area, arrived in New Zealand.¹²³ He was soon followed by an advance party

¹¹⁶Ibid., p. 124.

¹¹⁷Ibid., pp. 92-93.

¹¹⁸Ibid., pp. 95-112.

¹¹⁹Ibid., pp. 94-95.

¹²⁰Ibid., p. 120. No vote of confidence was taken since it was, in most respects, a coalition government.

¹²¹New Zealand Minister, Washington, to Prime Minister, Document 224, April 9, 1942, in Documents, III, 261.

¹²²Prime Minister to New Zealand Minister, Washington, Document 225, April 11, 1942, Ibid., p. 261.

¹²³Nash, A Working Democracy, p. 117.

of 5,000 American soldiers.¹²⁴ On June 18 a complete Marine division arrived in the Fiji Islands.¹²⁵ The long-awaited American reinforcements had at last arrived.

¹²⁴Baker, New Zealand People at War, p. 73.

¹²⁵Prime Minister to New Zealand Minister, Washington, Document 226, June 18, 1942, in Documents, III, 262.

CHAPTER V

REPRIEVE AND REALIGNMENT

The arrival of American troops did much to relax the tension in New Zealand, but the possibility of invasion was ever present. At times the presence of American troops added to New Zealand fears because they seemed oblivious to the shortage of arms among the Dominion's defense forces. The New Zealand forces and particularly the Air Force had never been actually included in any command.¹ This made it extremely hard to get any war material from the United States. New Zealand was eligible for lend-lease under terms of the Anglo-British agreement and also an additional agreement that had been concluded separately by the New Zealand Government and the United States,² but requisition for materials still had to go through a long chain of command.³ When Admiral Ghormley assumed command of the South Pacific

¹Ross, Air Force, p. 109.

²U. S., Statutes at Large, LVI, Part 2, 611-613.

³Ross, Air Force, p. 109. To get planes New Zealand first had to go to the British Chiefs of Staff who had to approve the requisition. Next the Joint Chiefs of Staff in Washington had to approve it; from there it passed to the Munitions Assignment Committee in Washington, who had to approve all requisitions in the different theaters of war. Next it passed to the Air Assignment Committee and then back to the Munitions Committee for final approval.

area with headquarters at Auckland, New Zealanders confidently expected to come under American command and receive American supplies. At the beginning Ghormley told them that he was neither responsible for New Zealand defense nor was he obligated to find the necessary materials to assure adequate self-defense.⁴ However, after three months of negotiations with the United States, the Dominion's forces were finally placed under Ghormley's command.⁵

More difficulties arose when the United States proposed sending additional troops to the Fiji Islands. These troops were to be diverted from American units destined for New Zealand, and would replace Dominion forces on the islands,⁶ while New Zealand had hoped that troops of both nations would fight side by side if the Fiji Islands were invaded.⁷ It was a disappointment when they were told that withdrawal of the Dominion forces best suited the over-all Pacific war effort. The Americans, however, added that perhaps the withdrawn troops could ". . . be made available for amphibious training with . . . [their] 1st Marine Division

⁴Wood, Political and External Affairs, p. 244.

⁵Ross, Air Force, p. 127.

⁶New Zealand Minister, Washington, to Prime Minister of New Zealand, Document 281, May 6, 1942, in Documents, III, 318. There were 10,000 troops in the Fiji Islands. See Gillespie, The Pacific, pp. 50-51.

⁷Prime Minister of New Zealand to New Zealand Minister, Washington, Document 282, May 7, 1942, in Documents, III, 318.

in anticipation of joint offensive action to the North."⁸

New Zealand troops were transported home and became the nucleus of a new force known as the 3rd Division.⁹ This new division was about to begin its amphibian assault training when events changed the course of New Zealand defense.

The United States naval fleet had already fought one major battle with the Japanese in the Pacific. This action in the Coral Sea, while seemingly a Japanese victory, had kept the enemy from reinforcing New Guinea.¹⁰ Anxious to inflict a final major defeat upon the United States, the Japanese pressed for another battle, on their terms.¹¹ Between June 4 and June 7, 1942, the Battle of Midway raged with a loss of four Japanese aircraft carriers and 250 planes.¹² This battle changed the course of the war, for:

⁸ New Zealand Minister, Washington, to Prime Minister of New Zealand, Document 304, June 24, 1942, Ibid., p. 331.

⁹ Gillespie, The Pacific, p. 53. The 3rd Division was technically born May 14, 1942, and was formally called the Second New Zealand Expeditionary Force in the Pacific. These troops were never trained for amphibious assault but became garrison troops.

¹⁰ One American aircraft carrier and two other ships were destroyed by the Japanese. For details of the battle see Samuel Eliot Morison, History of United States Naval Operations in World War II, Vol. IV: Coral Sea, Midway and Submarine Actions, May, 1942—August, 1942 (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1950), pp. 33-64. Hereafter cited as Morison, Coral Sea, Midway and Submarines.

¹¹ Waters, The Navy, p. 288.

At one stroke the strategic situation in the Pacific had been reversed. Shorn of a major part of her hitherto predominant aircraft-carrier strength, Japan had lost the initiative. The balance of naval power in the Pacific was restored and thenceforth was to swing rapidly and heavily against Japan. The threat to New Zealand and Australia was definitely removed and in a few weeks the Allied forces passed to the offensive in the South Pacific.¹³

Fraser, heartened by the bright outlook,¹⁴ soon cabled General Freyberg for an estimate of reinforcements needed in the Far East. The Prime Minister informed the General that as many as 2,500 men could be sent.¹⁵ Freyberg reported that 2,500 would hardly cover the losses sustained in the last three months. He recommended that 4,700 be sent as a start in rebuilding the division.¹⁶ On August 29, the War Cabinet approved the dispatch of 5,500 men.¹⁷

Changes were also made in the civil defense structure. The Emergency Precautions Scheme was completely reorganized. Instead of every city and hamlet maintaining a completely independent unit, New Zealand was divided into

¹²The Americans lost one aircraft carrier. For details of the battle see Morison, Coral Sea, Midway and Submarines, pp. 101-140.

¹³Waters, The Navy, p. 290.

¹⁴The Evening Post (Wellington), June 8, 1942, p. 5.

¹⁵Army Headquarters, Wellington, to 2nd New Zealand Expeditionary Force Headquarters, Document 64, August 5, 1942, in Documents, II, 46.

¹⁶General Freyberg to Chief of General Staff (Wellington), Document 65, August 8, 1942, Ibid., p. 48.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 48n.

districts with each district containing a chapter, and a Civil Defense Minister was placed over the entire body.¹⁸ Although this change made it more efficient, some people saw little use in the entire Scheme. An editorial in The Evening Post (Wellington) accused the Government of continually complaining about manpower, but being unable to see that the EPS was one of the reasons for the shortage. The editorial advocated complete abandonment of the entire organization.¹⁹ The men who had joined the Fire Protection Scheme voiced the same sentiments when they argued that, in view of the new situation in the Pacific, the body no longer served any purpose.²⁰

Manpower shortages²¹ and the prospect of a major Allied offensive in the Pacific,²² prompted Fraser, in

¹⁸New Zealand, Parliamentary Debates, CCLXII (1943), 387.

¹⁹The Evening Post (Wellington), August 29, 1942, p. 8.

²⁰Ibid., August 8, 1942, p. 8.

²¹Women twenty-two and twenty-three were drafted to work in industries because of manpower shortages. See Ibid., August 3, 1942, p. 4. The Army was also scrutinized to make it more efficient. Jobs in the service that could be handled by women were catalogued and women were placed in these jobs to allow men to serve in a more useful capacity. See Ibid., September 3, 1942, p. 3. Even with the shortage of manpower the Government still had to draft men. By October, 1942, all men in the thirty-eight to forty-six age group, regardless of the number of children, were being called to serve. See Ibid., October 13, 1942, p. 4.

²²The naval battle of Guadalcanal, fought November 12-15, 1942, has been termed by Morison ". . . decisive not only in the struggle for the island, but in the Pacific war at large." The Japanese failed to reinforce the island. This

November, 1942, to ask Prime Minister Churchill if New Zealand troops could be withdrawn from the Middle East.²³ Fraser declared that New Zealand could not maintain two divisions and continue to meet increased Allied war production demands at home. Now that the Middle Eastern situation looked comparatively safe,²⁴ and due to the ever present Japanese threat, it was ". . . felt that the place of the 2nd New Zealand division . . . [was] here in the South Pacific."²⁵ New Zealand became even more demanding when it was learned that the Australian divisions were being withdrawn to fight the Japanese.²⁶ Churchill, by pleading shipping difficulties, shipping hazards, and finally stating that the loss of Australian troops made the New Zealand division more important,²⁷ succeeded in persuading the Labour Government to keep the Expeditionary Force in the Middle

ultimately led to an American victory. For details see Samuel Eliot Morison, History of United States Naval Operations in World War II, Vol. V: The Struggle for Guadalcanal, August, 1942--February, 1943 (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1950), pp. 281-287.

²³Prime Minister of New Zealand to Prime Minister of United Kingdom, Document 176, November 19, 1942, in Documents, II, 142-144.

²⁴Ibid., p. 142. The victory at Alamein and Allied landings in French North Africa made the Middle East situation look quite stable.

²⁵Ibid., p. 144.

²⁶See Wood, Political and External Affairs, p. 249.

²⁷Prime Minister of United Kingdom to Prime Minister of New Zealand, Document 179, December 2, 1942, in Documents, II, 147.

East.²⁸ Australia, disturbed with the decision, declared
 ". . . the struggle in New Guinea . . . [has] important im-
 plications on the security of New Zealand."²⁹ Australian
 troops were fighting there and according to the sister
 Dominion, so should New Zealand forces.

The decision to maintain the 2nd Division in the
 Middle East meant that other measures would have to be taken
 to alleviate the shortages of workers. The Government re-
 solved that a cut could be made in the home defense system.
 Therefore, in December, 1942, Home Guard training was reduced
 from twenty-four to eight hours per month.³⁰ Further reduc-
 tions were ordered in February, 1943,³¹ and on June 26, it
 was announced that the Home Guard would train twenty-four
 hours per year.³² Most of the Territorial force were taken
 off mobilization standing and placed on reserve.³³ By the
 end of June, 1943, the entire defense force was a mere
 20,000 men.³⁴ The Emergency Precautions Scheme was further

²⁸ Prime Minister of New Zealand to Prime Minister of
 United Kingdom, Document 181, December 4, 1942, Ibid., p.
 149.

²⁹ Prime Minister of Australia to Prime Minister of
 New Zealand, Document 187, December 14, 1942, Ibid., pp.
 153-154.

³⁰ The Evening Post (Wellington), December 8, 1942, p.
 8.

³¹ Ibid., February 6, 1943, p. 4.

³² Ibid., June 26, 1943, p. 6.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Gillespie, The Pacific, p. 109.

reduced to small mobile units;³⁵ bomb shelter construction³⁶ and blackouts were stopped.³⁷

Still plagued with manpower problems and now forced by political pressure to discontinue one of the divisions,³⁸ Fraser asked Churchill if he and Roosevelt could send a joint telegram conveying to Parliament the need for the 2nd Division in the European war. This Churchill, in conjunction with Roosevelt, eloquently did.³⁹ Swayed by the same worn-out arguments from the mother country, Parliament gave its consent to retention of the division in the European theater.⁴⁰ This meant the end of a Pacific division.

The final decision concerning the 2nd Division was accompanied by a furlough scheme whereby many veteran servicemen would be returned home for three months.⁴¹ Troops were needed to replace those on leave, so men from the now defunct 3rd Division, trained for jungle warfare, were sent to the

³⁵The Evening Post (Wellington), February 27, 1943, p. 4.

³⁶New Zealand, Parliamentary Debates, CCLXII (1943), 387-388.

³⁷Ibid., p. 387.

³⁸Prime Minister of New Zealand to Prime Minister of United Kingdom, Document 222, April 29, 1943, in Documents, II, 189.

³⁹Prime Minister of United Kingdom to Prime Minister of New Zealand, Document 237, April 21, 1943, Ibid., p. 210.

⁴⁰Prime Minister of New Zealand to Prime Minister of United Kingdom, Document 239, May 17, 1943, Ibid., p. 211.

⁴¹Wood, Political and External Affairs, p. 260.

European theater.⁴² At the end of the three months the furloughed men were to go back, but after working and enjoying a peaceful life, they refused.⁴³ The Government could do nothing, for:

In the face of an angry public and demonstrations among the men themselves it proved impossible either to force the men to join the ships or to punish them for their refusal to do so. The impressive array of emergency powers at the disposal of the government were proved to count for nothing when confronted with determined opinion and action. By the end of 1943, the episode showed the war was over as far as the average citizen's immediate awareness was concerned.⁴⁴

⁴²Ibid. See also William Hosking Oliver, The Story of New Zealand (London: Faber and Faber, 1960), p. 206.

⁴³Oliver, The Story of New Zealand, p. 206.

⁴⁴Ibid.

CONCLUSION

New Zealand, traditionally the most loyal and dependent of the British Commonwealth countries, sought to maintain this distinction throughout the critical years of the war. This time-honored policy of looking at the world through British eyes led to confusion in conducting the war and in matters of defense. Some Labour politicians seemed to talk of independence in policy-making, but still talked of allegiance to Britain in almost the same breath, while other officials, especially military leaders, were willing to assess the situation and plan to meet the danger. Generally the latter were overshadowed by British opinion and were often criticized for not following the experienced judgment of greater powers. Leaders of the Labour Party, anxious to have their policies implemented with as little opposition as possible, often used British policies and recommendations as the final justifying argument.

It seems clear that New Zealand relied too heavily on collective security in planning for the defense of the nation. The sending of all of her elite troops to England and the Middle East during the first year of the war can be justified, but, as the Japanese threat became increasingly obvious, the continuation of this policy with only a poorly-

trained force of Territorials and Home Guardsmen—men unfit for overseas service—to man home defenses, is difficult to understand. Total reliance on Britain and a concentrated effort to please the mother country would seem the only plausible answer. Singapore was the key to New Zealand defense. New Zealanders were led to believe that the island fortress was impregnable and, thus, were convinced that the Japanese would be stopped. As long as Singapore was there and the British promised a fleet to protect the South Pacific, the Dominion felt reasonably safe. In order to send such a fleet, however, Britain must also be secure at home; so time and again, the statement "If Britain fell the Dominion would be helpless" is used to justify New Zealand's sending more men and materials to the European theater. Even during the crucial months just before the attack on Pearl Harbor, when a few people were beginning to be skeptical about such a defense posture, the soothing words of Churchill, plus the glowing reports of the exploits of the New Zealand Expeditionary Force, which appeared regularly in New Zealand newspapers, served to satisfy the bulk of New Zealanders.

The brief periods of independent action and the several blunt statements made by the Labour Government concerning British foreign policy during the war can be attributed largely to frustration. Britain failed to supply many of the weapons promised, and seemed unable or unwilling to realize the Dominion's precarious position. New Zealand, increasingly

aware of the fact that she must search elsewhere for help, attempted to establish stronger relations with the United States, but was hampered by the jealousy of the mother country. Desperate for assistance and anxious to play a larger role in planning the strategy of the Pacific war, the Dominion boldly formed and exerted her own opinion on certain strategic issues. Bernard Gordon, in his book New Zealand Becomes a Pacific Power, maintains that, because of this defiant action, New Zealand emerges from the war as a new power in the Pacific with a definite national foreign policy. This is somewhat hard to justify. New Zealand, by allowing her troops to remain in the European theater instead of withdrawing them to fight the Japanese, revealed that she was content to oppose only in words—not in action—and thus lost the chance of measurably gaining political power in Pacific relations immediately after the war. Foundations for building an independent foreign policy, laid before the war, most assuredly were made firmer as a result of the conflict, but it is highly questionable to assume that New Zealand had cast off her title of "the most loyal of the Dominions."

One must conclude that New Zealand's position in the conflict is somewhat unique—a South Pacific country sending her elite troops to fight an enemy more than 12,000 miles away, while Japan, the obvious foe, appears about to invade the homeland. New Zealand should have demanded and withdrawn her forces from Europe to protect herself and to help

her Pacific Allies defeat the Japanese. Despite the many explanations given for not doing so, the primary reason was that New Zealand still looked at the world with British eyes and still sought the praise of the mother country. The lesson in geography, almost disastrously taught by the Japanese, seemed to make few immediate impressions on the century-old traditions of New Zealanders.

APPENDIX

SECRETARIES OF STATE AND GOVERNORS GENERAL

1935—1943*

The initials SSDA represent Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs. The Secretaries of State during the war were:

January 28, 1939—September 3, 1939—Viscount Caldecote
(then Sir Thomas Inship)

September 3, 1939—May 12, 1940—Anthony Eden

May 12, 1940—October 3, 1940—Viscount Caldecote

October 3, 1940—February 19, 1942—Viscount Cranbrone

February 19, 1942—September 28, 1943—Clement Atlee

September 28, 1943—August 3, 1945—Viscount Cranbrone

August 3, 1945—October 7, 1947—Viscount Addison

The initials GGNZ represent Governor General of New Zealand. The Governors General were:

1935-1941—Viscount Galway (died March 27, 1943)

1941-1946—Marshall of the Air Force, Sir Cyril Newall

* New Zealand. War History Branch. Department of Internal Affairs, Documents Relating to New Zealand's Participation in the Second World War (3 vols.; Wellington: War History Branch, Department of Internal Affairs, 1939-63), III, 1n.

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This work contains a number of Prime Minister Fraser's Parliamentary and radio speeches made during the war.

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